

# CutBank

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## CutBank 11

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# CutBank 11





# CutBank

*Fall/Winter 1978*

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*Cover cartoon by Ron Hauge*

## DRAGONFLY

There is a mist rising over a trout pool  
on the Elwha where a blue dragonfly falters  
on a broken stone  
on a broken wing near the gate  
to Woodrow Wilson Cemetery now  
almost taken by the river  
as the dragonfly will be taken, its wings  
translucent in the tangled sunlight.  
One light  
bounce and it disappears. The river  
glows with its catch  
like the luminous bones clacking  
against each other in the silver  
current, caught in the rivernet  
like the homesteaders'

cabin timbers growing soggy,  
crumbling downstream, coming to rest  
in the pool of a German  
Brown which would have pleased  
the man whose family spread a checkered  
yellow cloth on the bank, silent  
in prayer before their lemonade and shoo  
fly pie, the mother dressed in patience,  
white organdy and lace, her hair  
high and golden as the German Brown,  
the children's laughter haphazard  
as the river. The War  
in France hesitates  
in a trench taking a man  
whose eyes close on the Olympic  
Rainforest, on the Elwha and the cabin,

now deserted, but for a cup  
on an oak table catching the rain  
through an open window as the river  
rises on their headstones  
patient as the trout  
waiting for the phosphorescent  
blue dragonfly.

**AUGUST, 1934**

No wind down here, but  
watching the tops of tall trees  
you can see the wind.  
The toy planes circling between  
roads, houses, boats and  
back again climb the sea wind  
droning: summer flies  
whose noise is almost silence.

No wind down here and  
when the wings with their numbers  
like secret codes for  
unencompassed oceans, skies  
and continents have  
come down, fearing the darkness,  
then in the dark trees  
no-one will see any wind.



## **BARN MICE**

We mount them on the east wall  
with a cow's skull from Nevada.  
The sand, when they pass it around,  
causes sleep, moving from eye to eye,  
and the lights are only those  
lights we've given them from the fat  
palm leaves of an oasis, molded  
to the inside like calcium  
in building a city from the ruins  
or ruins from the pieces of flesh,  
a tail almost whole of the rotting  
cat we found, calling it young  
between the bales of hay,  
last year's first cutting too late  
for the horses, good only for beef  
or this grave, the moldings of twine  
cut through by an ancient tooth.

## TIME'S THREE

Women fresh from the small bakeries  
of Puerto Penasco come through here.  
I follow them into the courtyards  
where bougainvillea covers the walls,  
and the fading sun of their flowers  
slips off their branches like blood,  
falling for any beautiful  
presence known like their plain  
dresses falling to the ground.  
I know their homes are the miles  
they cover at night filling  
their glasses & imagining the sun  
falling behind the wall again  
just as it happened for the sake  
their treasures ask of morning.

I hold them here with the lies  
I've heard them tell the children  
at the backdoor, curious as to why  
their fathers come and go so quickly.  
They listen & fall to the corners.  
They spend the day at their bakeries  
remembering roaches surrendering  
their bodies to their heels, gathering  
dirt around them in self burial  
or protection from the light.

I wait for them at the edge of town  
drunk because I'm sorry we're leaving,  
but still able to walk, not any less  
a man to be turning away from them  
because they've forgotten their lines  
and turned loose their eyes  
on the townspeople who are gathering  
stones for our deaths, or for their own  
lying out back in the sun to dry,  
blind to our movements, the sockets  
emptied as usual & leaving a trail  
for the weakest to pack in by mule,  
one so light they'll lose it in time.

## **WALKING AT NIGHT**

We walk away like ghosts  
leaving the car buried.  
Night snow, the road fallen  
away, soft sides tunneling  
the gorge. Our feet follow without sound.

My hand floats a small moon  
into yours, palm cupped,  
blood beating the air between.  
Together, all bends to field,  
random bodies of willow and ash.  
The big house sleeps  
and we are free to pass through  
the gate unseen  
having lost all color and age.  
Far off, cottonwoods stand guard.

We come for hay, two brown horses  
walking out of night  
for feeding, snow  
islands on their backs, flying up  
from the tangled manes.



## REST HOME, KEARNEY, NEBRASKA

The ash from one hair, a thought,  
blows down the hall. Each woman  
is asleep, the tip of a needle  
drinking from a black vein. They grow  
full with the night. The place is overcrowded.  
A dog-eared Reader's Digest on the table  
says death is like a star  
expanding in its own waning light.

Yet look at them, some having come farther  
than others, all a long way  
to die here. The sterile great-grandfathers  
open their mouths like parachutes.  
The words, all His names  
keep them from falling, keep the paraquet  
from rising like outstanding growth  
around them. A man by his grandmother  
unfolds her native flag. She touches the stars.  
She wishes she were a star!

The well-lit corridor has all the women,  
but not the hands or teeth  
to keep them from dreaming, or those awake  
from prayer to blue icons,  
blue Mary, and to the stars  
behind Her in the trees before moonbreak—

How the stars must alight in the deer's eyes,  
bent over the salt lick  
steaming deep in the wind-blown woods,  
far into night. Tomorrow,  
when the deer returns, it will not find the lick,  
a sliver sunken through grass, its light  
falling through the dirt. If tomorrow were kind,  
it would never come. Outside, the mason  
is done for the day, and leaves  
the walls to repair themselves nightly.



## CONOCO STATION AND HOUSE

Outside, under the window each day he sits  
in a folding wooden chair, the driveway  
dust probably settled for the evening,  
his wife leaning out the window as though  
she meant to look out over what he sees,  
to will, finally, a car down the road.  
The trees across the road fall nearly still  
to leave reflections not quite undisturbed  
in blue eyes that seem not to move at all,  
her calico dress waving like the grass  
that waves with the slight wind, how he expects  
the wind. His hands deep inside themselves, cupped  
on each knee, he knows without looking up  
she calls without turning from where she watches.

## THE NAMES OF QUILTS

Well no, I don't prick myself often,  
and thimbles are a nuisance,  
feel like dead fingers.  
This one? A Drunkard's Path,  
colors and curves, the blue was  
Aunt Mary's Sunday dress,  
she was partial to the blackberry brandy.  
When I got married Ma made two,  
Century of Progress and Goose in the Pond.  
Eli was a good man,  
we kept warm enough.  
There in that corner,  
Grandma Hastings made that,  
Hands All Around. She once cured Sarah Nuttall  
just by touching her. But Sarah was always sickly.  
Made my girl a Corn and Beans, always liked  
growing things. She made one, Electric Fans,  
good with a needle that one,  
liked fancy things.  
The women in town, they're working  
on Robbing Peter to Pay Paul.  
Talking mostly, it'll take a year,  
never get done for the church bazaar.  
They go in for religious patterns.  
In that chest there's an Old Maid's Puzzle,  
Grandma never finished it  
and I didn't want to before I met Eli,  
bad luck. Then the babies came  
and there wasn't time.  
Well, when I do prick myself,  
just rub it on a red piece,  
for good luck.

## DISCHARGE DAY

a chapter from a novel *The Lost Get Back Boogie*

The captain was silhouetted on horseback like a piece of burnt iron against the sun. The brim of his straw hat was pulled to shade his sun-darkened face, and he held the sawed-off double-barrel shotgun with the stock propped against his thigh to avoid touching the metal. We swung our axes into the roots of tree stumps, our backs glistening and brown and arched with vertebrae, while the chainsaws whined into the felled trees and lopped them off into segments. Our Clorox-faded green and white pinstripe trousers were stained at the knees with sweat and the sandy dirt from the river bottom, and the insects that boiled out of the grass stuck to our skin and burrowed into the wet creases of our necks. No one spoke, not even to caution a man to step back from the swing of an axe or the roaring band of a MuCulloch saw ripping in a white spray of splinters through a stump. The work was understood and accomplished with the smoothness and certitude and rhythm that comes from years of learning that it will never have a variation. Each time we hooked the trace chains on a stump, slapped the reins across the mules' flanks, and pulled it free in one snapping burst of roots and loam, we moved closer to the wide bend of the Mississippi and the line of willow trees and dappled shade along the bank.

"Okay, water and piss it," the captain said.

We dropped the axes, prizing bars and shovels, and followed behind the switching tail of the captain's horse down to the willows and the water can that sat in the tall grass with the dipper hung on the side by its ladle. The wide brown expanse of the river shimmered flatly in the sun, and on the far bank, where the world of the free people began, white egrets were nesting in the sand. The Mississippi was almost a half mile across at that point, and there was a story among the Negro convicts that during the forties a one-legged trusty named Wooden Dick had whipped a mule into the river before the bell count on Camp H, and had held onto his tail across the current to the other side. But the free people said Wooden Dick was a nigger's myth; he was just a syphilitic old man who had his leg amputated at the charity hospital at New Orleans and who later went blind on julip



(a mixture of molasses, shelled corn, water, yeast, and lighter fluid that the Negroes would boil in a can on the radiator overnight) and fell into the river and drowned under the weight of the artificial leg given him by the state. And I believed the free people, because I never knew or heard of anyone who beat Angola.

We rolled cigarettes from our state issue of Bugler and Virginia Extra tobacco and wheat-straw papers, and those who had sent off for the dollar-fifty rolling machines sold by a mail order house in Memphis took out their Prince Albert cans of neatly glued and clipped cigarettes that were as good as tailor-mades. There was still a mineral streaked piece of ice floating in the water can, and we spilled the dipper over our mouths and chests and let the coldness of the water run down inside our trousers. The captain gave his horse to one of the Negroes to take into the shallows, and sat against a tree trunk with the bowl of his pipe cupped in his hand, which rested on the huge bulge of his abdomen below his cartridge belt. He wore no socks under his half-topped boots, and the area above his ankles was hairless and chafed a dead, shaling color.

He lived in a small frame cottage by the front gate with the other free people, and each twilight he returned home to a cancer-ridden hardshell Baptist wife from Mississippi who taught Bible lessons to the Alcoholics Anonymous group in the Block on Sunday mornings. In the time I was on his gang I saw him kill one convict, a half-wit Negro kid who had been sent up from the mental hospital at Mandeville. We were breaking a field down by the Red Hat House, and the boy dropped the plow loops off his wrists and began to walk across the rows towards the river. The captain shouted at him twice from the saddle, then raised forward on the pommel, aimed, and let off the first barrel. The boy's shirt jumped at the shoulder, as though the breeze had caught it, but he kept walking across the rows with his unlaced boots flopping on his feet like galoshes. The captain held the stock tight into his shoulder and fired again, and the boy tripped forward across the rows with a single jet of scarlet bursting out just below his kinky, uncut hairline.

A pickup truck driven by one of the young hacks rolled in a cloud of dust down the meandering road through the fields towards me. The rocks banged under the fenders, and the dust coated the stunted cattails in the irrigation ditches. I put out my Virginia Extra cigarette against the sole of my boot and stripped the paper down the glued seam and let the tobacco blow apart in the wind.

"I reckon that's your walking ticket, Iry," the captain said.

The hack slowed the truck to a stop next to the Red Hat House and blew his horn. I took my shirt off the willow branch where I had left it at eight o'clock field count that morning.

"How much money you got coming on discharge?" the captain said.

"About forty-three dollars."

"You take this five and send it to me, and you keep your ass out of here."

"That's all right, boss."

"Shit, it is. You'll be sleeping in the Sally after you run your money out your pecker on beer and women."

I watched him play his old self-deluding game, with the green tip of a five dollar bill showing above the laced edge of his convict-made wallet. He splayed over the bill section of the wallet with his thick thumb and held it out momentarily, then folded it again in his palm. It was his favorite ritual of generosity when a convict earned good time on his gang and went back on the street.

"Well, just don't do nothing to get violated back to the farm, Iry," he said.

I shook hands with him and walked across the field to the pickup truck. The hack turned the truck around and we rolled down the baked and corrugated road through the bottom section of the farm towards the Block. I looked through the back window and watched the ugly, squat white building called the Red Hat House grow smaller against the line of willows on the river. It was named during the thirties when the big stripes (the violent and the insane) were kept there. In those days, before the Block with its lockdown section was built, the dangerous ones wore black and white striped jumpers and straw hats that were painted red. When they went in at night from the fields they had to strip naked for a body search and their clothes were thrown into the building after them. Later, the building came to house the electric chair, and someone had painted in broken letters on one wall: *This is where they knock the fire out of your ass.*

We drove through the acres of new corn, sugar cane, and sweet potatoes, the squared sections and weedless rows mathematically perfect, each thing in its ordered and pre-designed place, past Camp H and its roofless and crumbling stone buildings left over from the Civil War, past the one-story rows of barracks on Camp I, then the shattered and weed-grown block of concrete slab in an empty field by



Camp A where the two iron sweat boxes were bulldozed out in the early fifties. I closed off the hot stream of air through the wind vane and rolled a cigarette.

"What are you going to do outside?" the hack said. He chewed gum, and his lean sun-tanned face and washed-out blue eyes looked at me flatly with his question. His starched khaki short sleeves were folded in a neat cuff above his biceps. As a new guard he had the same status among us as a fish, a convict just beginning his first fall.

"I haven't thought about it yet," I said.

"There's plenty of work if a man wants to do it." His eyes were young and mean, and there was just enough of that north Louisiana Baptist righteousness in his voice to make you pause before you spoke again.

"I've heard that."

"It don't take long to get your ass put back in here if you ain't working," he said.

I licked the glued seam of the cigarette paper, folded it down under my thumb, and crimped the ends.

"You got a match, boss?"

His eyes looked over my face, trying to peel through the skin and reach inside the insult of being called a title that was given only to the old hacks who had been on the farm for years. He took a kitchen match from his shirt pocket and handed it to me.

I popped the match on my fingernail and drew in on the suck of flame and glue and the strong black taste of the Virginia Extra. We passed the prison cemetery with its faded wooden markers and tin cans of withered flowers and the grave of Alton Bienvenu. He did thirty-three years in Angola and had the record for time spent in the sweat box on Camp A (twenty-two days in July with space only large enough for the knees and buttocks to collapse against the sides and still hold a man in an upright position, a slop bucket set between the ankles and one air hole the diameter of a cigar drilled in the iron door). He died in 1957, three years before I went in, but even when I was in the fish tank (the thirty days of processing and classification in lockdown you go through before you enter the main population) I heard about the man who broke out twice when he was a young stiff, took the black Betty everyday on the levee gang when the hacks used to shoot and bury a half dozen convicts a week in the embankment, and later as an old man worked paroles through an uncle in the state legislature for other convicts when he had none coming himself,

taught reading to illiterates, had morphine tablets smuggled back from the prison section of the charity hospital in New Orleans for a junkie who was going to fry, and testified before a governor's board in Baton Rouge about the reasons for convicts on Angola farm slashing the tendons in their ankles. After his death he was canonized in the prison's group legend with a saint's aura rivaled only by a Peter, crucified upside down in the Roman arena with his shackles still stretched between his legs.

The mound of Alton Bienvenu's grave was covered with a cross of flowers, a thick purple, white, and gold-tinted shower of violets, petunias, cowslips, and buttercups from the fields. A trusty was cutting away the St. Augustine grass from the edge of the mound with a gardener's trowel.

"What do you think about that?" the hack said.

"I guess it's hard to keep a grave clean," I said, and I pinched the hot ash of my cigarette against the paint on the outside of the car door.

"That's some shit, aint it? Putting flowers on a man's grave that's already gone to hell." He spit his chewing gum into the wind, and drove the truck with one hand over the ruts as though he were aiming between his tightened knuckles at the distant green square of enclosure by the front gate called the Block.

The wind was cool through the concrete, shaded breezeway as we walked towards my dormitory. The trustees were watering the recreation yard, and the grass and weight lifting sets glistened in the sun. We reached the first lock and waited for the hack to pull the combination of levers that would slide the gate. The Saturday morning cleaning crews were washing down the walls and floor in my dormitory with buckets of soap and water and an astringent antiseptic that burned the inside of your head when you breathed it. The dirt shaled off my boots on the wet floor, but no sign of protest or irritation showed on a man's face, because the hack was there with me, there was some vague reason for them to re-do part of their work, and they squeezed out their mops in the buckets, the ashes dropping from their cigarettes, and went about mopping my muddy tracks with their eyes as flat as glass.

"You can keep your underwear and your shoes," the hack said. "Throw your other clothes and sheets in a pile outside. Roll your mattress and don't leave nothing behind. I'll pick you up in the rec room when you get finished and take you over to possessions."



I pulled off my work uniform, put on my clack sandals, and walked down the corridor to the showers. I let the cold water boil over my head and face until my breath came short in my chest. One man on the cleaning detail had stopped mopping and was watching me through the doorless opening in the shower partition. He was a queen in Magnolia section who was finishing his second jolt for child molesting. His buttocks swelled out like a pear, and he always kept his shirt buttoned at the throat and never bathed.

"Take off, Morton. No show today, babe," I said.

"I don't want nothing off you," he said, and rinsed his mop in the bucket, his soft stomach hanging over his belt.

"You guys watch the goddamn floor," I heard somebody yell down the corridor, then the noise of the first crews who had been knocked off from the fields. "We done cleaned it twice already. You take your goddamn shoes off."

When I got back to my cell the corridor was striped with the dry imprints of bare feet, and my cell partner, W. J. Posey, was sitting shirtless on his bunk, with his knees drawn up before him, smoking the wet end of a hand-rolled cigarette between his lips without removing it. His balding pate was sunburned and flecked with pieces of dead skin, and the knobs of his elbows and shoulders and the areas of bone in his chest were the color of a dead carp. He was working on five to fifteen, a three-time loser for hanging paper, and in the year we had celled together warrants had been filed for him in three other states. His withered arms were covered with faded tattoos done in Lewisburg and Parchman, and his thick, nicotine-stained fingernails looked like claws.

"You want to try that sweet scene in Baton Rouge tonight?" he said.

"I might miss my train, W. J."

"Seventy-five dollars, babe, and you won't wake up with a hard on for a month. I tell you it's better than pissing away your money on the next five dollar cunt you meet in a beer joint."

"I'll catch it the next time around. Tonight I'm just going to shake it," I said, and smiled at him, because I didn't want to hurt his feelings about his favorite story, one that had been retold in every section of the Block at one time or another, and which probably caused more solitary love affairs in darkened cells throughout the farm than all the other sexual legends that worked into our minds about three o'clock when the sun started to bore a small hole in the back of our bent

heads.

"You get the money, Iry. Let them girls pull all that bad juice out your pecker, and you'll hit the street Sunday morning like them two years wasn't there."

"Okay, write it down. Maybe I can get a train tomorrow, but I'm going to kick your ass if I get nailed in a whorehouse raid."

He was already living in my evening's experience while he wrote the address down on the torn edge of a piece of prison stationery. But W. J.'s story about the Room in a three-story ante-bellum house north of the Huey Long Bridge was the best erotic account I had ever heard in either prison or the army. The first night I celled with him the warden's wife sent a portable television set down to the Block so we could watch Sandy Koufax pitch against Cincinnati, and after the set had shorted out in a diminishing white spot of light against the darkness of the dormitory and the communal groan of the eighty men sitting on the floor, W. J. began his story about the Room. His wasted face looked awful in the glow of cobalt light from the breezeway, but his story enchanted each of us in the same way that a fable read by an elementary school teacher confirms the fantasies of children. I was never sure if the story was myth or an accurate account of a whorehouse in Baton Rouge during the forties, but nevertheless it was very real to us at that moment.

The Room was on the third floor of the house, furnished with a tester bed, a short ice box filled with pink wine, bourbon, and cracked ice, and an electric buzzer on a cord that was placed under a solitary pillow. There were three doors that faced the Room, and after the Negro maid let you in and showed you how to snap the bolt from the inside, you undressed, fixed a drink, and pressed one of the three buttons on the buzzer. They came out in pairs and worked on you with their lips and avocado mulatto breasts, traded positions all over your body, then suddenly withdrew through the wall when you pushed the button a second time. Your head spun with the liquor and the pure pagan exhilaration of doing things and having things happen to you which you didn't think possible before, and when you pressed the button a third time you were bursting inside with that fine point of fire that waited to exhaust itself in the torn maidenhead of a sixteen-year-old virgin.

I put on the shiny suit and the off-color brown shoes that had been brought to my cell last night by the count man. I threw my sheets, blanket, and the rest of my prison uniforms and denims into the



corridor, and put my underwear, work boots, and three new shirts and pairs of socks into the box the suit had come in.

"You want the purses and wallets, W. J.?"

"Yeah, give them to me. I can trade them to that punk in Ash for a couple of decks."

"Take care, babe. Don't hang out any more on the wash line."

"Just tell that big red-headed bitch to slide it up and down the banister a few times to keep my lunch warm." He dropped his cigarette stub into the butt can by his bunk and picked at his toe nails.

I walked down the corridor past the row of open cells and the men with bath towels around their waists clacking in their wood sandals towards the roar of water and shouting in the shower stalls. The wind through the breezeway was cool against my face and damp neck. I waited at the second lock for the hack to open up.

"You know the rec don't open till twelve-thirty, Paret," he said.

"Mr. Benson said he wanted me to wait for him there, boss."

"Well, you ain't supposed to be there."

"Let him through, Frank," the other hack on the lock said.

The gate slide back with its quiet rush of hydraulically-released pressure. I waited in the dead space between the first and second gates for the hack to pull the combination of levers again.

Our recreation room had several folding card tables, a canteen where you could buy koolade and soda pop, and a small library filled with worthless books donated by the Salvation Army. Anything that was either vaguely pornographic or violent, and in particular racial, was somehow eaten up in a censoring process that must have begun at the time of donation and ended at the front gate. But anyway it was thorough, because there wasn't a plot in one of those books that wouldn't bore the most moronic among us. I sat at a card table that was covered with burns like melted plastic insects, and rolled a cagarette from the last tobacco in my package of Virginia Extra.

I heard the lock hiss, then the noise of the first men walking through the dead space, their voices echoing briefly off the stone walls, into the recreation room, where they would wait until the dining hall opened at 12:45. They all wore clean denims and pinstripes, their hair wet and slicked back over the ears, combs clipped in their shirt pockets, pomade and aftershave lotion glistening in their pompadours and sideburns, with names like Popcorn, Snowbird, and Git-It-And-Go cloroxed into their trousers.

"Hey, Willard, get out them goddamn guitars," one man said.



Each Saturday afternoon our country band played on the green stretch of lawn between the first two buildings in the Block. We had one steel guitar and pickups and amplifiers for the two flat tops, and our fiddle and mandolin players held their instruments right into the microphone, so we could reach out with "The Orange Blossom Special" and "Please Release Me, Darling" all the way across the cane field to Camp I.

Willard, the trusty, opened the closet where the instruments were kept and handed out the two Kay flat tops. The one I used had a kapo fashioned from a pencil and piece of innertube on the second fret of the neck. West Finley, whose brother named East was also in Angola, handed the guitar to me in his clumsy fashion, with his huge hand squeezed tight on the strings and his bad teeth grinning around his cigar. He was from Mississippi, and he chewed on cigars all day and left any area he was working in covered with tobacco spittle. He was doing life with his brother, which is ten and a half in Louisiana, for burning down a paper mill in Bogalusa while the watchman was asleep next to an oil drum.

"I mean you look slick, cotton. Them free people clothes ought to turn you a piece of ass right on the back seat of the Greyhound," he said.

"West, your goddamn ass," I said.

"No, shit, man. Threads like that is going to have pussy snapping all over Baton Rouge." His lean, hillbilly face was full of good humor and the wide opening of tobacco juice in his mouth. "Break down my song for me, babe, because I ain't going to be able to hear it played right for a long time."

The others formed around us, grinning, their arms folded in front of them, with cigarettes held up casually to their mouths, waiting for West to enter the best part of his performance.

"No pick," I said.

"Shit," and he said it with that singular two syllable pronunciation of the Mississippi delta, *shee-it*. He took an empty match cover from the ash tray, folded it in half, and handed it to me between his callused fingers. "Now let's get it on, Iry. The boss man is going to be ladling them peas in a minute."

Our band's rhythm guitar man sat across from me with the other big Kay propped on his folded thigh. I clicked the match cover once across the open strings, sharpened the B and A, and turned the face of the guitar towards him so he could see my E cord configuration on the

neck. The song was an old Jimmie Rogers piece that began "If you don't like my peaches, don't shake my tree," and then the lyrics became worse. But West was beautiful. He bopped on the waxed floor, the shined points of the alligator shoes his girl had sent him flashing above his own scuff marks, bumping and grinding as he went into the dirty boogie, his oiled ducktailed hair collapsed in a black web over his face. One man took a small harmonica from his shirt pocket and blew a deep, train-moaning bass behind us, and West caught it and pumped the air with his loins, his arms stretched out beside him, while the other men whistled and clapped and grabbed themselves. Through a crack of shoulders I saw the young hack come through the lock into the recreation room, and I slid back down the neck to E again and bled it off quietly on the treble strings.

West's face was perspiring and his eyes bright. He took his cigar from the table's edge, and his breath came short when he spoke. "When you get up to Nashville and start busting all that millionaire cunt, you tell them West Finley give you your start. And if they need anything extra, tell them to ship it in a box C.O.D. and I'll stamp it with the hardest prick in Angola."

Everyone laughed, their mouths full of empty spaces and gold and lead fillings. Then the outside bell rang and the third lock, which controlled the next section of the breezeway, hissed back in a suck of air.

"Got to scarf it down and put some protein in the pecker, cotton. Do something sweet for me tonight," West said, and popped two fingers off his thumbnail into my arm as he walked past me towards the lock with the other men.

"Just leave the guitar on the table," the hack said. "The state car is leaving out at one."

I picked up my box and followed him back through the lock. He held up my discharge slip to the hack by the levers, which was unnecessary, since the lock was already opened and all the old bosses along the breezeway knew that I was going out that day, anyway. But as I watched him walk in front of me, with his starched khaki shirt shaping and reshaping across his back like iron, I realized that he would be holding up papers of denial or permission with a whitened click of knuckles for the rest of his life.

"You better move unless you want to walk down to the highway," he said, halfway over his shoulder.

We went to possessions, and he waited while the trusty looked



through the rows of alphabetized, manila envelopes that were stuffed into the tiers of shelves and hung with stringed, circular tags. The trusty flipped his stiffened fingers down a row in a rattling of glue and paper, and shook out one flattened envelope and brushed the dust off the top with his palm. The hack bit on a match stick and looked at his watch.

"Check it and sign for it," the trusty said. "You got forty-three dollars coming in discharge money and fifty-eight in your commissary fund. I can't give you nothing but fives and ones and some silver. They done cleaned me out this morning."

"That's all right," I said.

I opened the manila envelope and took out the things that I had entered the Calcasieu Parish jail with two years and three months ago after I had killed a man: a blunted Minie ball perforated with a hole that I had used as a weight when I fished as a boy on Bayou Teche and Spanish Lake; the gold vest watch my father gave me when I graduated from high school; a Swiss army knife with a can opener, screwdriver, and a saw that could build a cabin; one die from a pair of dice, the only thing I brought back from thirteen months in Korea because they had separated me from sixteen others who went up Heart Break Ridge and stayed there in that pile of wasted ash; and a billfold with all the celluloid-enclosed pieces of identification that are so important to us, now outdated and worthless in their cracked description of who the bearer was.

We walked out of the Block into the brilliant sunlight, and the hack drove us down the front road past the small clapboard cottages where the free people lived. The wash on the lines straightened and dropped in the wind, the tiny gardens were planted with chrysanthemums and rose bushes, and housewives in print dresses appeared quickly in an open screen door to shout at the children in the yard. It could have been a scene surgically removed from a working class neighborhood, except for the presence of the Negro trusties watering the grass or weeding a vegetable patch.

Then there was the front gate, with three strands of barbed wire leaned inward on top, and the wooden gun tower to one side. The oiled road on the other side bounced and shimmered with heat waves and stretched off through the green border of trees and second growth on the edge of the ditches. I got out of the car with my cardboard box under my arm.

"Paret coming out," the hack said.

I knew he was going to try to shake hands while the gate was being swung back over the cattleguard, and I kept my attention fixed on the road and used my free hand to look for a cigarette in my shirt pocket. The hack shook a Camel loose from his pack and held it up to me.

"Well, thanks, Mr. Benson," I said.

"Keep the rest of them. I got some more in the cage." So I had to shake hands with him, afterall. He got back in the truck, with a pinch of light in his iron face, his role a little more secure.

I walked across the cattleguard and heard the gate rattle and lock behind me. Four other men with cardboard boxes and suits similar to mine (we had a choice of three styles upon discharge) sat on the wooden waiting bench by the fence. The shade of the gun tower broke in an oblong square across their bodies.

"The state car ought to be up in a minute, Paret," the gate man said. He was one of the old ones, left over from the thirties, and he had probably killed and buried more men in the levee than any other hack on the farm. Now, he was almost seventy, covered with the kind of obscene white fat that comes from years of drinking corn whiskey, and there wasn't a town in Louisiana or Mississippi where he could retire in safety from the convicts whom he had put on ant hills or run double-time with wheelbarrows up and down the levee until they collapsed on their hands and knees.

"I think I need to hoof this one," I said.

"It's twenty miles out to that highway, boy." And he didn't say it unkindly. The word came to him as automatically as anything else that he raised up out of thirty-five years of doing almost the same type of time that the rest of us pulled.

"I know that, boss. But I got to stretch it out." I didn't turn to look at him, but I knew that his slate-green eyes were staring into my back with a mixture of resentment and impotence at seeing a piece of personal property moved across a line into a world where he himself could not function.

The dead water in the ditches along the road was covered with lily pads, and dragonflies flicked with their purple wings above the newly opened flowers. The leaves on the trees were coated with dust, and the red-black soil at the roots was lined with the tracings of night crawlers. I was perspiring under my coat, and I pulled it off with one hand and stuck it through the twine wrapped around the cardboard box. A mile up the road I heard the tires of the state car whining hotly down the oiled surface. They slowed in second gear along side of me,



the hack bent forward into the steering wheel so he could speak past his passenger.

"That's a hot sonofabitch to walk, and you probably ain't going to hitch no ride on the highway."

I smiled and shook the palm of my hand at them, and after the car had accelerated away in a bright yellow cloud of gravel and dust and oil someone shot the finger out the back window.

I threw the cardboard box into the ditch and walked three more miles to a beer tavern and cafe set off by the side of the road in a circle of gravel. The faded wooden sides of the building were covered with rotted election posters (*Don't get caught short, Vote Long—Speedy O. Long, a slave to no man and a servant to all*), flaking and rusted tin signs advertising Hadacol and Carry-On, and stickers for Brown Mule, Calumet baking powder, and Doctor Tichner's Painless Laxative. A huge live oak tree, covered with Spanish moss, grew by one side of the building, and its roots had swelled under the wall with enough strength to bend the window jamb.

It was dark and cool inside, with a wooden ceiling fan turning overhead, and the bar shined with the dull light of the neon beer signs and the emptiness of the room. It felt strange to pull out the chair from the bar and scrape it into position and sit down. The bartender was in the kitchen talking with a Negro girl. His arms were covered with tattoos and a heavy growth of white hair. He wore a folded butcher's apron tied around his great girth of stomach.

"Hey, podner, how about a Jax down here," I said.

He leaned into the service window, his heavy arms folded in front of him and his head extended under the enclosure.

"Just get it out of the cooler, mister, and I'll be with you in a minute."

I went behind the bar and stuck my hand into the deep ice-filled cooler and pulled out a bottle of Jax and snapped off the cap in the opener box. My wrist and arm ached with the cold and shale of ice against my skin. The foam boiled over the lip and ran down on my hand in a way that was as strange, at that moment, as the bar chair, the dull neon beer signs, and the Negro girl scraping a spatula vacantly across the flat surface of the stove. I drank another Jax before the man came out of the kitchen, then I ate a poor boy sandwich with shrimp, oysters, lettuce and sauce hanging out the sides of the French bread.

"You just getting out?" the man said. He said it in the flat, casual



tone that most free people use towards convicts, that same quality of voice behind the Xeroxed letters from Boston asking for the donation of our eyes.

I put three dollar bills on the bar and walked towards the square of sunlight against the front door.

"Say, buddy, it don't matter to me what you're getting out of. I was just saying my cousin will give you a ride up to the highway in a few minutes."

I walked down the oiled road a quarter of a mile, and his cousin picked me up in a stake truck and drove me all the way to the train depot in Baton Rouge.

## **THE CLAMS**

They breathed like the eggs of birds,  
a quiet and neighborly gift. That's what he thought  
handing you forty across the porch by the kitchen.  
They cleaned themselves like a river over rocks,  
breathed sand to the bottom till their necks were a long clean tube.  
You wanted to whistle when their bodies steamed open.  
When your arms passed over them, like wings, they glowed,  
this kettle of clams, the tender eyelids of the moon, opening.

## WE WERE YOUNG

We were young and the summer  
outside town like hay high as a house.  
Nights we heard people breathing  
through the wall.  
Each day was the beginning of a story.  
We sailed along  
on the soles of old shoes.  
I knew nothing of  
'melancholy-factors'  
and that proofs make sentences behave.  
There was no date on a street scene.  
There really was wind when  
the trees rustled.  
Someone fed me  
a piece of cold chicken  
while I couldn't get out of watching  
some love-making.  
Later the friendliness was huge.  
In the hall a grown woman  
put her huge breast in my hand.  
I shoved my tongue in her mouth.  
I'd grown older.

*translated by stuart friebert*

## THE EFFECT OF CHEMISTRY

The effect of chemistry—a moment of sadness  
appears. It's raining outside.  
You have to watch the coated pills  
in this dampness.  
Each body is sad in its own way.  
Desire grows for someone  
who's not there.  
It's as if a certain bird began  
to sing.  
No, you're not happy  
going through daydreams  
with people who speak a different language.  
It rains in our eyes.  
Misunderstandings grow  
if the door is open.  
Just where is it we're supposed to spend some time?  
Dreamy democrats  
stare after us.  
They think  
we have to love each other.

*translated by stuart friebert*

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to Stuart Friebert*

## **EVERY YEAR**

Every year the fishing gets harder.  
You want to doze in your father's arms.  
Next best thing you go to the schoolyard,  
sit in a swing, watch for falling stars.  
A bat swoops low, that's that.

You hire a boat, go down river.  
The moon hands over its crown.  
All this time not a word.

Fish sitting together at one depth  
and for half a minute you feel the glory  
of not having schemed at all:

the hook you bait takes little thought.  
A man wants to catch his father a better fish.  
Hints of spring in the water, wind pushing  
hard to that bare little island every year.  
He's fathering there.



## ONCE WHITE

Rain, and the earth bruises easily.  
Home loses its whiteness and the family inside  
confesses: I have used paint, coins, and

the language of Poland to describe him. Father,  
you lost us in some dream you had of your life.  
I brought a photograph of a dead actor and

haven't seen you in years. A sister younger  
than me says to a man she loves: picture soldiers  
entering the small towns of Poland and firing

into screams. All she has seen is the streets  
growing around the house, once white.  
And my own work is wrong. In old movies

there is romance in the shelling and the rain.

## THE DOLOROSA DROWNS IN NORMAL BRILLIANCE

Lying on this bench in the airport at Madrid,  
I see the opening of Easter, thinking,  
supine daybreaks are what the dead have. These  
are dark glasses bought last night at Orly  
to hide eyes that won't close, and a lack of baggage.  
A cavernous Spanish liner inches slowly past,  
slow as the tiny man in earphones walking backwards  
who waves and waves, his pinlight writing  
some new interpretation of safety.  
They waver together in the rose mirage.

Over me lean *Guardia Civil* in vast hats,  
their lead-lined capes draped unnaturally.  
One bends down and lifts my glasses.  
Oh I know, my eyes by now are puffed  
like adders, gorged royal on this holy day.  
There is staring, conferring, uncertainty.  
Passport? Ticket? I'm sliding backwards  
over Goya's plain to Meknes, there being no god  
but the one, pulled like the horizontal bronze Hermaphrodite  
whose shock lies flat against the Prado wall.

It didn't happen on Spanish soil: relieved,  
they walk away like history, asking only that I  
try to rise up whole. This is no morning  
for rejoicing. Raises a day like any other,  
light again in that same relentless hierarchy,  
coronation of the usual in right order.  
I lie quiet as a bird shot over sanctuary,  
who won't be dying, thinking, *it is enough*.  
Dancing outside in red jet exhaust,  
the little man waves and waves.

## **STEALING THE PHOTOGRAPHS**

Our hero had moved to the basement. He  
turns now, three thousand miles from this drawer,  
knowing I violate naturally, by malice and need.  
I pull it open and smell old uniforms,  
damp bronze, trespass.

Fishline hides Rappela hooks which guard the policies.  
Here are half-squeezed Ben-Gay tubes for the  
stiff seasonal killer, obscure tools for freeing things  
from their endless tendency to fuse. Peking money,  
shadow puppets, wings.

The faces are half-obliterated, sunny, unsure.  
Captain in the cockpit with his blurred smile,  
Mother at the base in saddle-shoes, carrying me  
as he floated bombs over China—hounding Mao  
while others fought The Fuehrer.

These purple hearts will make good sinkers  
as you cast me out to find others. I am  
not in your eyes but in your weapons:  
I am the bullet, the hook, your  
daughter of metal, burning.

## PILING UP ROCKS

Consider this map: the alluvial fan  
of the Midwest's rivers. I can put my  
whole hand over them, draw them into my  
body, vein for vein. It's Egyptian,  
living here, loving water, testaments,  
and the dead (our good radicals, they  
line the rivers' shoulders as crows).  
We're safe, meaning somehow moral. Not  
empty, exactly, but conduits for the  
harvest to run through

*This goes to the Museum of Natural  
History—we'll be clay figures down to  
our bottom-fish. They'll leave out  
all that other, which is the truth:*

It flattened us like frescoes, our  
herds piled one above the other.  
Weather, weather: a slap on the prairie,  
the dust rolling out for miles—black twisters  
nicking the pebble-beds, or state-wide blizzards  
out of the mouths of canyons. If the rivers  
stood straight up, brittle, you laid down not  
thinking at all. Weather could enter you,  
the way spiked rods pulled down lightning,  
the planet unravelling.

We'll have to dig root-cellars.  
When the weather rises, or the times do,  
you want to press hard against what's left:  
stone in a hole, or other bodies.



## DRIFTING INTO SNOW

1

Another day of snowing  
drifts up my porch, kicking  
at the screen like a drunk  
at the wrong house. This is

the third day without sun.  
The barn, only five steps  
from the back door, lies  
on its face and slides down  
towards the woods.

2

That same night I chip the ice  
off the door and walk outside.  
It is barely snowing. Two stars  
rise out of my breath and lose  
themselves into clouds.

The barn is gone. So is the  
chicken coop. The trees, collapsing  
with ice, fall to both sides of me  
sending up bushels of snow. I keep  
walking. In the distance, lights  
smolder over Alpena like a flock  
of white heron.

3

So this is all I am:  
two footprints carving  
the earth in half.

# *Portfolio*

Ron Hauge



"Dinner, Ivan!"





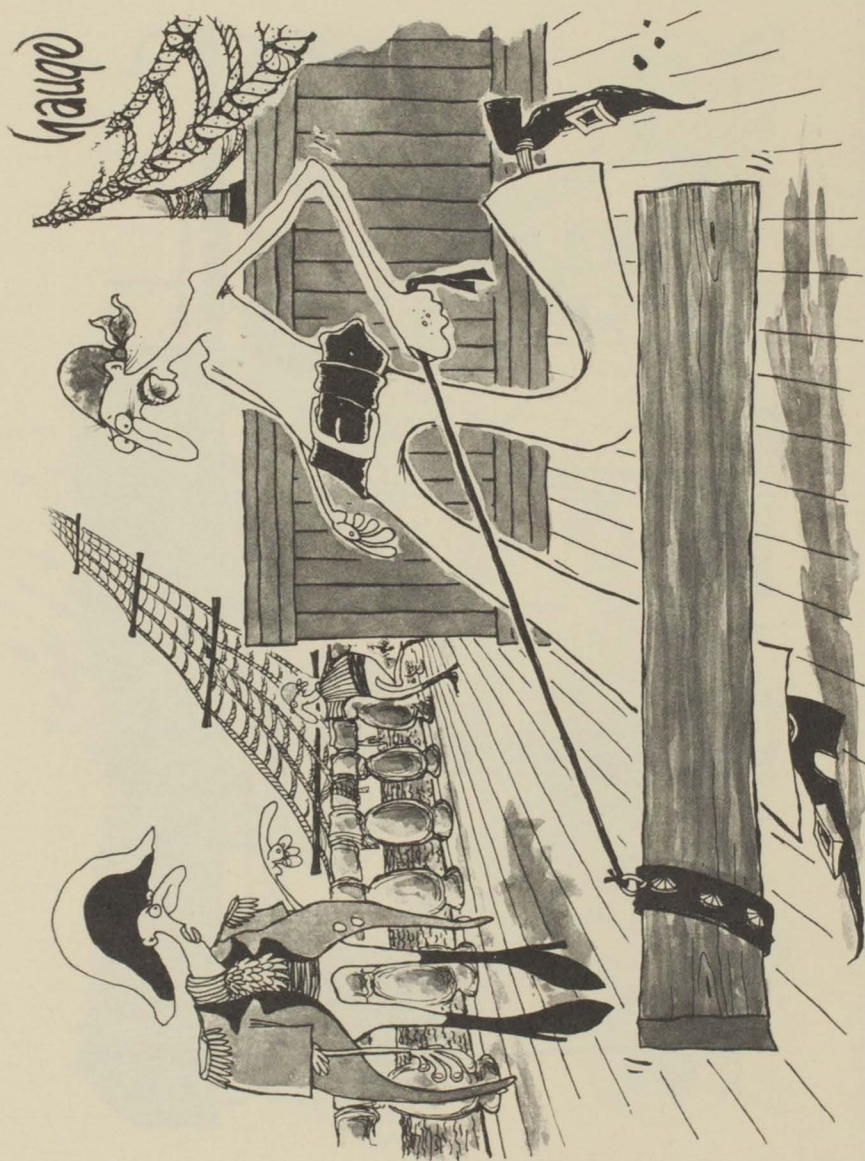
"After 35 years, Howard, it has to end like *this*?"



"Your eyes are like full moons, your lips rose petals. Your hair is a field of golden wheat blowing in the breeze  
..."



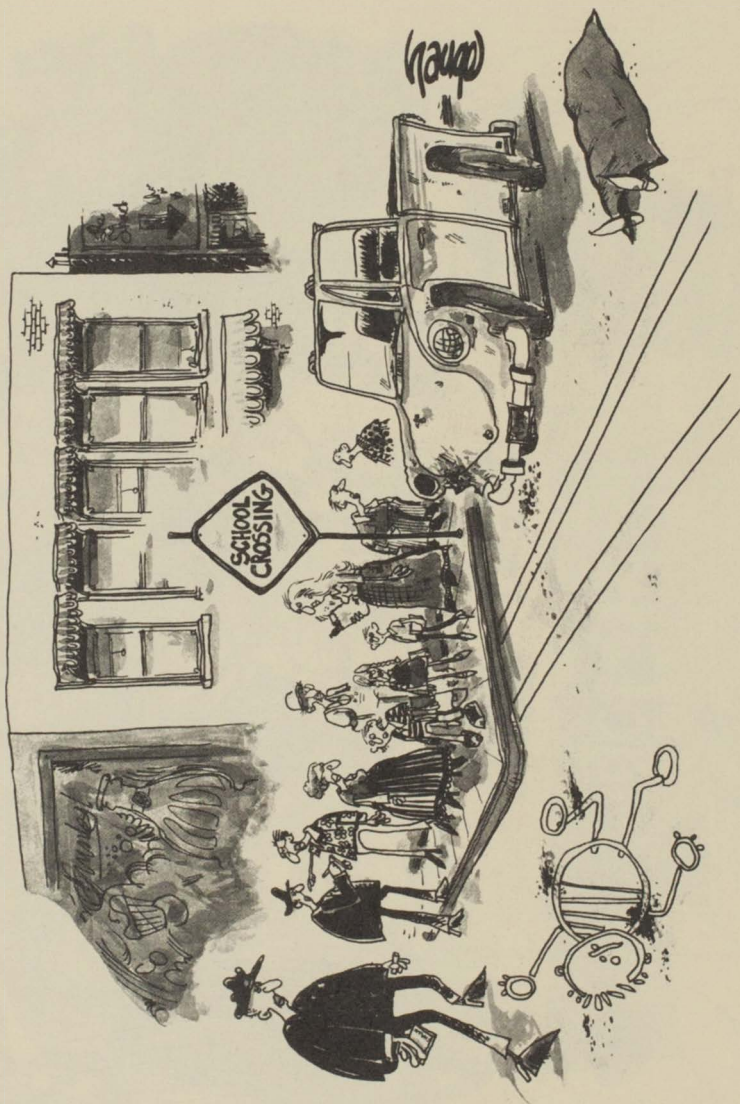




"Dammit Hampton, you knew perfectly well what I meant when I said you'd walk the plank!"











## **BLUES AT THE BARBECUE**

I'm in a state of suspended Zulu  
Ho the fat sticks under the chicken claws  
Ho the cold cans she could crack  
She suck the sweet joints she sing  
The cornpone duet and when she sweats  
The climate backs up clear to Baltimore

I'm watching the Funky Windmill and the Pigtrot  
Ho the shotgun and the shotgun house  
Ho magnolias glued to the spook tree  
Salt pork in the greens, grits under gravy  
Baby come home where the toilets flush  
And the TV burns blue in the window

I'm tied up myself in a croker sack  
Jump in the river like a bag of sad cats  
Ho the harp blow nasty and the slow drum  
Ho the easy terms the lowdown payment of love  
When the moon fries up you find me  
At the foot of the table at the bottom of the bed

## RAIN ON THE FACE IS A BAD DREAM

### I

If rain, why not love?  
Why not a tree with wings,  
hands that journey farther than breath?

The child home from the hunt  
fire on the stove, deer hanging outside.  
Above the pines the eagle glides  
in quiet rain. There are  
cracks in the wall  
like intelligent hands.

Blood rushes gently under the skin,  
rain laps the shingles. The boy fears  
the tip of his penis, that his lungs might be  
wet leaves on the window  
gray clouds mounting overhead; he dreams  
a father in the backyard raking leaves,  
smoke rising from the rusty burnbarrel.

### II

On windy days walnuts blow  
to the ground, small dogs howl  
at nothing. Her breath slow, her fingers  
thin, she bends  
in any wind. Who needs a man needs death  
she would say. She listens  
to the dying cicada, the small breath  
of the rose, the blind soliloquy  
of sleep. Geese fly this river  
twice a year, sparrows fly alone. I'm fine  
she says, my life is good. She lies.  
Rain on the face is a bad dream.



## CONGENITALIA

I'm talking about a dog with mange,  
but your house could have termites too.  
You might have built them in  
with a spare bedroom,  
or you might have brought them home  
in a new piece of furniture.  
Most likely they were there  
from the beginning, tiny egg sacs  
nestled next to pitch pockets  
in your framing timbers. The man  
at the lumber yard didn't know.  
Like an old monk with syphilis,  
he'd have gladly built his own house  
from that wood. So why do these  
things happen? There's no carpentry,  
no medicine for what comes rotting  
from the womb. I don't know why  
any more than you, but my dog's  
a gun dog, so I will take my gun  
and find the proper point of aim  
to put an end to pointless pain.

## HARD WINTER

Walking the lines I found a rabbit  
caught in the slats of a snow fence—  
wide-eyed, dead.

No marks.

Whatever it ran from  
missed. Snow

gave it a decent burial.

Wind dug it up again.

I pulled the stiff body free,  
still frozen in flight,  
and lay it on the ground.

My gloves were covered with fur.

If there was a lesson

I left it there,

got back to my fire.

## THE COAL-STRIKE AT CONSUMERS, UTAH: 1933

Parmly shoves the ramrod down the dirty barrel  
of his .06, like a steel train entering the mine.  
Outside the Slavs jabber in tongues as strange to him  
as Ute, and the Finns with their narrow eyes and round  
faces red as the bricks of their saunas  
could be Navajo, they die the same.

He enters the heat of a day too drowsy to stir,  
finds Gordon Creek dry for the first time in his life  
and blames the thirst of the Serbs.

Meanwhile, Mayor West sends Troopers armed with whiskey  
and swords up the pinon hills to Consumers.  
As they throw their heads back to drink, hats fall,  
desperados, all the lost Utes they admired as kids  
down their throats.

They arrive like Pancho and Cisco, trucks  
kicking up bursts of dust like horses, to find the barricades  
down, the mattresses back on their beds, Aino Louma's  
ancient Studebaker grinning at home like a sow,

and poor Parmly, walking naked down the dusty creek,  
a band of Slav-squaws, bare-breasted,  
prodding him with his own gun. They've pissed on him  
and he's crying, and the women seeing him cry like their children  
squat down, offer him and his Troopers suck  
"to make them human."



## EARLY MARRIAGE: BURLINGTON, IOWA, 1881

We swam in the stream and collected  
Tadpoles. They squirmed in our hands  
As we ran to the bucket:  
Little handfuls of quick-change,  
We were half-naked and the sun browned our skin.  
Last year you found  
A red ear at the corn-husking bee:  
And I'm the one you chose to kiss.  
Today, after  
I'd brought your lunch to the orchard,  
I had time to walk the path by the stream.

At times your hands seem  
So big, like wounded bobolinks  
They flap their tenderness.  
I am afraid  
O touching your skin, leg to leg,  
Under the quilt at night. But then wish  
You'd come down the cowpath,  
Touch the hair on the back of my neck, run  
Your finger on the inside of my arm  
And know, as I know, how soft it is.

Last night I dreamed of a field,  
A flock of birds swarmed  
Over my breasts. Their soft bodies  
Warmed my skin as they rose, scared and sure.

At breakfast we talk  
Of the school teacher in Prairie Grove,  
Found with her lover.  
Tired of primers and cold mornings perhaps,  
She was surprised by Mrs. Pollock, sent to find her:  
"They rose like thrushes in the prairie grass,  
startled and so alive."

Husband,  
We choose what few things we can,  
The rest we're given  
By the haze and vista of this farm.

## **HOLDING ON**

You dreamed of fish with white meat,  
white teeth, all gnashing: shark, cod,  
halibut, a sullen dogfish. Your skull  
throbs from last night's booze. Flip  
the switch and face a firing squad  
of light.

Maybe tomorrow you'll sleep forever,  
nestle down into yourself and look for  
the thing you've lost. Under a mound  
of warm quilt you're buried in dreams.

Rituals of morning, of rising, of bacon  
grease snapping at your wrists, warmed-  
up coffee black as sky. You wish  
you were tougher, that your face  
wouldn't feel walked on. Even the slender  
lilac makes it through winter. Shiver  
in morning air as you go out, with empty  
hands, nothing more sure than a steering  
wheel to hold onto.



## NATURAL HISTORY

Lighted, the domed roof.  
Inside, in the dark,  
how quiet the hallways must be,  
and the animals, their heads  
bowed, or they're shyly  
eyeing each other.  
Some drink from their

reflections, the reflected  
leaves shiver out of reach.  
Will they ever be released  
from their bodies?  
Here are the birds

that cannot fly,  
and here the woodchuck  
forever half-in, half-out  
of the ground.  
You could see their complaints  
in their eyes  
if their eyes were not glass.  
This is their dignity.  
This is how secrets

survive us somewhere else.  
Six eggs in a nest,  
six tight fists.  
The snake that wants  
to eat them but will not;  
its body arched  
in eternal hunger,

how safe not to get  
what you want: the sky  
so flat it won't  
shimmer near the moon,  
the pond so still  
no fish will break its surface.

## **HIVE**

The city denuding.  
The bricks leaving by thousands.  
Head over foot  
through the streets like iron shoes.

They file to a place  
filled with marsh and sand.  
No one would live here  
in his right mind.

Already they form a ring  
then a second ring.  
For God's sake  
they are building a hive  
and it generates heat  
like no boiler could:  
Cerise, then white, then clear.

From miles arrive people  
who hover around the structure  
cursing each other for warmth.  
But it is too late.  
The bricks sing in  
their dark tribal voices  
Sing of a wall  
and the little ones to come.



## AFTER THE FREEZE

—for C.C.

Folding and unfolding her fingers  
your mother's talking to an empty chair.  
Her hands rest on the Bible in her lap.

Overcast, the sky is either  
a blue woman in a uniform  
or a woman in a blue uniform.

After the first hard freeze, sycamores  
and maples go first. Out front  
your little brother's raking leaves

happily because his favorite holiday  
is Halloween. Wave when he smiles at you,  
soon he'll drive away for good.

Decked in dress blues, now the sky  
unbuttons just enough to let  
the morning glisten like a trophy.

Your mother's talking to an empty chair.  
Your little brother listens. Someone with  
your eyes is walking to the door.

## BUS RIDE TO EDEN

The old man got on at Hardrock, hoisting himself up the steps with the help of the handrail. He shuffled to the rear of the long bus and took a seat across from Ken Hodges, who stopped reading the morning *Express* long enough to look out at the bus station — a reconverted gas station, painted a noncommittal white — and the handful of passengers boarding. Except for the old man and two younger men with the tawed faces and slouch hats of ranch hands, the incoming passengers could have been from anywhere. Los Angeles, Prairie Junction — or New York.

“Like it back here over the wheels. You get a little bounce for your money,” the old man mumbled, easing himself into his seat.

Was he being sociable; or talking to himself? Ken nodded out of courtesy and went back to his paper. Revolutions, rapes, rummies, roistering, traffic jams. This is news? Twelfth-century Paris had its traffic jams; the Greeks had Eros and Dionysius. Rockets to the moon? Commonplace now, too, worth no more than a skimming of the headlines. A weary satiety settled over him. Folding his paper he looked out at the countryside. Ranch country mostly. Red, scrubby hills separated by narrow, flat valleys. Red cattle mostly, red cattle with white faces. Here and there, in the valleys, in the flats along the dry creek beds, farmland: Rusty, rocky soil, bare here, stubbled there, for it was early December, well past the harvest. Ken knew the countryside. Two Junes ago, when it was green and inviting, he had brought his boy up here to a summer camp on the Llano River. Now, stripped, the land was drab and sullen.

“Like to read the paper? I’m through with it.”

The old man shook his head. Ruddy and craggy like the land, he wore a stained Stetson with two fisted dents in the crown, the brim curled up cowboy-style. Behind thick lenses were watery blue eyes with crinkles at the edges which gave his face a kind of amused look as if he had long ago decided that this was the proper set to turn toward the world and nothing — neither hell or high water — was going to change it. “Can’t read print no more,” he said. “But don’t make no difference. When I wanta know what’s going on, I just git in this lil old wagon and ride down to Eden. That’s where my daughter lives. Between here and there’s everything I wanta know.”



His words ran together mushily, while his tongue bobbed like a fishing cork between toothless red gums, and when he was through speaking his mouth sagged inwardly into an ugly pouch. Gaffer? Senile? Pitiful. Too bad he didn't have sense or money enough to get himself some teeth. Ken looked away, out the window. Red, lumpy hills. Puffy clouds drifting lazily across the bright blue sky. Windmills; tall, gaunt, still.

"Do you see that black brush out there?"

Ken looked and thought he saw what the old man was talking about.

"Thirty years ago that was all shin oak and mesquite. Government paid the ranchers to bulldoze it; said they'd have better pastures. They didn't figure on that ol' black brush. It was like some suckers I know, hiding out o' sight, just waiting for a chance to grab hold o' things. Thorny as all get-out too. You can't get a cow within ten feet of it. Good for nothin' but goats."

For the first time Ken noticed the goats. Not many. Only a scattering. Blurred streaks flashing by. White, woolly things standing up on their hind legs to nibble at the top twigs, dancing around the mulberry bush like satyrs. He laughed. The old man didn't. Though he still had that droll look on his face, maybe if he was a cowman he didn't think it was funny. Ken stopped laughing.

It was old country. Remnants of old stone fences and old stone buildings. Like Roman ruins except there were no arches or curves. Only straight lines and squares. Like forts. Like that two-story house over there, the roof and windows and steps long gone, only the thick rectangular walls still standing. Behind those stolid walls Ken could see a family in homespun firing long rifles at Comanches or Apaches or somebody. It probably never happened that way; but it might have; if not, it should have.

The bus was slowing down now for construction crews warned by a sign "15 Miles an Hour, New Interstate 25, Federal Contribution \$100,000,000, State \$5,000,000, County \$40,000." Bulldozers were clearing new right-of-way at the side of the old road, pinching off trees like toothpicks. Long-necked cranes bobbed their heads up and down like feeding dinosaurs, clawing, biting, swallowing big mouthfuls of flinty earth. Farther along steamrollers crunched over freshly-laid white gravel. Stirred by all the activity, Ken pulled a road map from the pocket of the seat in front of him, found some dotted lines designating the new highway and did some figuring. . . . Two



miles probably between Benson and Fort Hicks. Four between. . . .

For 105,040,000 dollars, at least forty miles and forty minutes! He'd tell the old man about it, that when the new four-lane speedway was completed between Hardrock and Eden, eliminating all the curves and rolls and crossroads, it was going to be. . . . Growling, the bus was forced to detour down a dusty, bumpy side road behind a lengthening line of slow-moving cars; the impatient driver gunned the motor over and over again. . . . No, what was the point of it? Maybe he wouldn't want to know. Besides, with that gear box grinding under him, he wouldn't be able to hear anyway.

They came to a stretch where an old stone fence, tumbling in spots but still largely intact, perfectly bisected the median between the old road and the new one a-building, as if it had been put there for that very purpose, to divide right from left, wrong from right, those heading northward to Eden from those heading southward to perdition. Ken stared in amazement.

Now, what d'ya think o' that?" the old man mumped, turning to him.

Ken wondered whether he was asking a question or making a statement. "That's something," he replied.

"Those old rock fences didn't rot, and they didn't rust. They took a lot of work — but in those days work wasn't nothing."

"Do you think they'll let it stand?"

"Prob'ly not. But if you want me to, I'll talk to the gov'nor about it." Chuckling, he chewed the air with his thin red gums.

Yes, somebody *should* talk to the governor about it, about that old fence which was just as wonderful in its own way as the new highway that was going to fly by both sides of it. Those thousands upon thousands of stones, fat ones, flat ones, formless ones, gathered haphazardly from the fields, going nowhere, doing nothing except sitting one upon another precariously, forever. . . . Though he knew that he would never send it, Ken mentally composed a letter to the governor. "Your Excellency: On new Interstate Highway 25, between the towns of So-and-so and So-and-so, there is an old stone fence which should be preserved as part of our heritage. It is a thing of beauty, of enduring and noble purpose, a monument, a reminder. . . . The men of old, the old men, the men who built this state, are dead, they are dying every day; nothing can save them. But if we act in time, we can still save this work of their hands. . . ."

The bus was speeding by the outhouses of a town — those

miserable shacks, junkyards, gas stations and motels that fray the edges of every modern town. Circling the square, and the inevitable courthouse, it came to a stop at a dingy, dirty terminal scrunched between a drug store and Ida's Cafe.

"New Deal," the driver called out, amid static, over his loud-speaking system. "We'll stop here six minutes."

There was a rush for the door, one line streaming into the terminal, the other breaking up into atoms around the bus.

"Don't understand it," the old man said. "Them jumping in and out of the bus every time it stops, when it's gonna start right up again. Reminds me o' grasshoppers."

"Like a cigarette? Or a cigar?" Ken asked.

"Maybe a cigar," the old man replied. Taking it, he sucked it like a candy barber pole and then chomped down on the end. A surprised look came over his face. "By golly; by golly," he exclaimed. "Now you know what I did? Left my teeth at home. Had oatmeal for breakfast and didn't need to put 'em in. Then I went off and forgot 'em."

So that was it. Ken smiled.

"It's funny to you and me," the old man said, "but it won't be to my daughter. She's always worrying about me getting old and forgetful, living by myself. My wife died three years ago." His jaw twitched. "Particularly with me using gas stoves that hafta be turned off at night. She thinks some night I'm gonna forget and I'm either gonna burn up or wake up 'sphixiated." Pulling a pocket-knife out of his pants he cut the end off the cigar and lit it. "Like that," he said, blowing out a cloud of heavy, pungent smoke.

Enjoyment radiated from the old man with the smoke as he puffed away. Intermittently he took to coughing and wheezing, and Ken wondered whether he had some kind of lung trouble and maybe shouldn't be smoking. If so it sure wasn't stopping him.

Just before the town of Mesquite, where the hills were giving way to rolling country and the soil was fading off from red to pink and gray, the old man pointed with the butt end of the stogey off to the left. "There used to be a cotton gin there, right there where that old black cow is standing. . . . And right there is where I saw my first yoke of oxen." He paused, his eyes glowing like the end of his cigar. "My father had told me about oxen, about how he used to plow with 'em and how they used to pull freight wagons up from the coast. But by the time I was old enough to know anything we were plowing with mules, so I'd never seen any." Smoke drifted about his head like a



dream. "But that summer — I musta been 'bout nine or ten — we brought some cotton to gin and it got to raining and raining, until you'da thought somebody had tipped the kettle up there. Had to stay at the gin for a couple o' days." The cigar was nearing its end; he took a rueful, measured look at it. "If it'd be raining like that right now, and if the roads were like they used to be, we'd be a-waiting too, and not a-going."

The butt went into the ashtray on the arm of the seat. "Well, anyway, the gin needed wood, lots of it, and mules sure couldn't pull through that mud. But there was this farmer the other side of Mesquite who still had some oxen and he brought in a whole wagon-load o' wood with those oxen. Musta been ten thousand pounds or more on that wagon; wheels went right down to the hubs; nothing coulda budged it except those oxen. There were four yoke o' them, and they didn't move very fast, just kinda plodded along, but when they pulled, that wagon went. Most o' the time the wheels didn't turn at all — it was sunk that deep into the mud. Wagon just slid over the mud, like a sled." He shook his head, as if he couldn't believe it himself. "By golly, that was a sight!"

A little farther up the highway he pointed excitedly over to the right. "There; there, where that stump is. That's where our home was when I was a boy." His jaw twitched again.

"How long ago was that?" Ken had guessed the man's age at eighty, and he wanted to see how close he had come to it.

"Too long ago to make any difference." Pulling a handkerchief out of his pocket, he coughed and spat into it. Ken thought a little more of him for using the handkerchief. "We raised cotton mostly, but it was a poor living cause we only made a crop when the Good Lord saw fit to send us rain, and that wasn't very often, no matter how hard we prayed. . . . *There*, right there at that fence, I saw my first automobile. I was picking cotton when all of a sudden I heard a clatter and a knocking, and when I looked up there it was, by golly, coming down the road; bumping and bouncing, cause that road was a wagon road, full o' ruts, deep ruts. They yelled to me, 'Hurry up 'n pick that cotton.' But I didn't say anything. I just stood there and looked." His handkerchief went up to his mouth again. "It was a holy sight to me — that buggy going down the road, without horses or mules."

Ken didn't like the way the old man was wheezing. Probably shouldn't have given him the cigar, but how the hell was he to know the old fellow had bad lungs? The bus slowed and turned into a side



roadway leading to a cluster of red brick buildings. It stopped in front of the largest one, marked with a plaque, "State Hospital — Main Office." Jumping out, the driver hurriedly opened the bin under the center of the vehicle and took out a large cardboard box marked "Blood" which he handed to an attendant at the door. Then he jumped back into the bus and it was off again. At every town the bus had left off and picked up things besides passengers — packets of newspapers, canvas mailbags, packages wrapped in stiff brown paper — but this was the first time it had made a non-scheduled stop to leave something. A little farther on down the road it stopped at a grain store to pick up three hundred-pound bags of cotton seed.

"It wasn't the cigar, was it?" Ken asked.

The old man gave him a disdainful look. "Hell no. If you'd a-swallowed as much dust in your time as I have, you'd be coughin' too. Hell no, it wasn't the cigar. I like a good cigar now and then." His tongue flicked out to capture a bit of tobacco left on his lip. "In about four or five years I won't be able to take these bus trips anymore — I figure I'll be blind as a bat by that time — but sure as I'm sitting here I'm still gonna smoke me a good cigar now and then. Nothing like a good cigar."

Right. Ken's mouth was itching for one but he was afraid to light up, because of the old man. He didn't even want to light a cigarette, though several people in the rear were smoking and dusty, curly haze was drifting through the bus.

"Listen," the old man said between a paroxysm of coughing. "You remember that cap rock back ten miles or so — where we came down outa the hills. That used to be the prettiest country I ever saw. Big live oak trees that had trunks three men couldn't put their arms around. Musta been two or three hundred years old. Well, we had a drought that lasted eight years, eight years by God, and before it was over with every one o' those live oaks was dead. Sorriest sight I ever saw in my life, those big trees standing there naked against the sky, their limbs a-pointing to the ground."

The spectacle flashed before Ken's eyes, and he winced.

"Things got so bad," the old man was saying; then his face contorted as if he had had a sudden pain in his chest. Ken was startled. But the look faded as quickly as it had appeared and the fellow picked up where he had left off, ". . . that I had to go to work for the government. Delivering mail."

The bus left the main highway again, this time down a side road

that in about a mile or so ended in a little town. Or rather it looked like a little town because there was a main street with a lot of old buildings and homes on it, but the windows and doors were all boarded up or missing and the only building with any life in it was a newly-painted white frame house in front of which the bus stopped. A lone passenger got off, a short, stout, simply but neatly dressed woman whose weight seemed such a burden that she had to be helped down the steps by the driver. As she picked up her brightly-polished brown leather suitcase and started to waddle toward the white house, Ken was struck with wonderment: Who was she? What kept her in this old ghost town? What had happened to it? What would happen to her when the bus shot straight as a stripe down the new highway?

Maybe the old man would know. During the interlude he had been wheezing again, but now he seemed to regain his breath.

"Do you know her, the fat lady who just got off?" Ken asked.

The old man didn't seem to hear. "Delivered mail right down this very road," he mumbled, as if he were talking to himself, "in a hack drawn by mules." That amused look turned into a chuckle. "By golly, there was an old German living on this road — about three miles farther up — named Benjamin Schlegel. Benjamin Sssch-le-gal. Had a head harder'n some o' the rocks on his place. Wouldn't put his name on his mailbox, no matter how many times I asked him to. He kept saying, 'You know vat my name iss, fhv should I put it on the mailbox?' Well, I quit delivering him mail" — the old man winked at Ken — "and he come stomping into the postoffice, belling like a Jersey bull and wanting to know 'vat's da matter mit da mail service?' I told him vat's da matter but he still wouldn't put his name on his mailbox. Wrote to Washington about it. But that didn't do him no good, cause they just sent his letter back to us. Finally, he put his name on the box but every time he saw me he'd get red in the face and sputter, 'You knew damn vell vat my name vas.' He was a good farmer but by golly he *vas* hardheaded." Again the old man opened his mouth wide and bit the air gleefully with his gums.

"The fat lady — her name wasn't Schlegel, was it?" Ken asked.

"No. Schlegel's wife died years ago and after that he picked up and moved away. Somewhere west, I heard."

Ken let it go at that.

At Crowell, where a large sign announced proudly, "Fastest Growing Little Town in the U. S.," the bumps left the land and it became completely level, so level you could scrape it with a ruler and



not get a crumb. New land, yellow as gold dust, rich-enough looking to buy the world, yet in every direction, as far as the eye could see, lying utterly bare and exposed, like one vast wasteland. The houses, where they stopped the eye here and there, were generally larger and finer built than those back down the road, yet there was something forbidding about them too. Anything set in that vast emptiness, even a castle, would probably have seemed stark and alien, and these homes, some veritable castles, were no exceptions: Moats of mottled grass and scraggly trees surrounded a few of them but for the most part the bare soil (and at other times of the year undoubtedly the crops) marched right up to the doorsills as if no frills were allowed on this land; none except maybe the big, pretentious homes themselves.

The towns were coming faster now, Sweetwater, Hope, Morganville, and they, too, like the homes along the highway, showed prosperity of a kind. Newer buildings, more glitter on the storefronts, more cars parked around. And on the outskirts of every town, coming and going, were racks upon racks of irrigation pipes looking like piled-up spaghetti, rows of long silver tanks marked "Ammonia," new red tractors, disc plows, harrows, reapers, mechanical cotton pickers with their long arm-like suction tubes. And going into every town there were the same signs, "First Baptist Church Welcomes You," followed by "More-Gro Fertilizer" and right behind that, "Crop and Hail Insurance, Phone 1234."

Though the old man was wheezing again, he wasn't missing a thing. His head spun from his window to Ken's and back again, his face shone like a child's. "It may look like gold but it ain't," he said at one point. "The yellower the soil the poorer it is. We farmed this land, my daddy and me and my brothers, for four years and couldn't raise jackrabbits. That's why we moved on up into the hills. But underneath that yellow stuff was real gold and we didn't know it."

Ken knew what he meant. He knew what the real gold was in this part of the country.

"Yeah, all that praying and there it was, right under our feet. Only we were too ignorant to know it. . . . Still, I guess you couldn't blame us too much. What'd we know about anything? School didn't start until December, cause we were all off picking cotton, and no sooner we got started, half a dozen kids would start a-whooping, so they'd have to close up school until spring time and by then we all had to help with spring planting." He grunted. "By golly, right under our feet and we didn't know it. But the kids now. . . . They keep 'em in school



until they polish up their heads like brass. No wonder they get three crops a year."

Ken wished the old fellow would take it easy, it was still a stretch to Eden. Maybe if he went back to reading the newspaper the old boy would stop. If he didn't he was going to blow a gasket or something. That wheezing sounded awful. And Ken still had the uneasy feeling that the cigar had set things off. He walked up to the front of the bus to ask the driver how far it was to Eden.

"'Bout twenty miles," the driver grunted out of the corner of his mouth, keeping his foot pressed to the pedal.

When Ken got back to his seat and looked out of the window, he could see a big whirlpool of dust blowing over against the horizon, dimming the outlines of a house and making it look in the distance like a shimmering, hazy desert mirage. A ball of tumbleweeds was bouncing across the yellow field. Though he couldn't feel the wind in the insulated bus he could almost taste the dust in his mouth. It wasn't a pleasant taste. They must lose a lot of top soil between plantings, he thought. It was a frightening sight, so much land laid bare and blowing away.

"My dad was so tight he'd skin a gnat for the taller," the old man said.

His mind on the dust, Ken wasn't sure he had heard right. "Taller?"

"Yeah, you know what taller is, don't you?"

Now it came to him. Tallow. He smiled.

"Yeah, my dad'd skin a gnat for the taller, but it wasn't cause he was stingy. It was the money that was tight. You had to work damn hard for a dollar. Course, they didn't call it hard work in those days, but they knew it was work. . . . And when you didn't know what the Good Lord was going to send you tomorrow or the next day, you'd better squirrel some of it away."

"Eden 5 Mi.," the sign said, and Ken breathed easier even if the old man didn't.

"Things are a lot looser now, a lot looser. If you want to plow, all you gotta do is dump in the gasoline. If you want a drink o' water, you just turn on the faucet. And if you get sick, penicillin and the government'll take care o' you."

Silver buildings, huge as cathedrals, with dozens of red-slatted wagons clustered around them and the ground all about white as snow with bits of cotton that had escaped the ginning, loomed up on both sides of the road. Then oblong concrete silos tall as skyscrapers

and heaped to the top (though you couldn't see it) with grain, like Pharaoh's granaries which Joseph filled to overflowing during the seven fat years.

"Gals are prettier too" — the old man winked at Ken — "and it ain't no sin anymore to look at 'em." Another spell of coughing followed, so hacking that Ken thought the old man was goint to split himself wide open.

Eden!

Turning off the highway, the bus careened into a side street and then was at the station, a brand new one painted a spanking shiny white. "Eden," the driver barked with redundancy into his microphone. "Ten minute stop." Passengers got up to disembark.

But the old man wasn't moving. His face looked white and pinched, he slumped in his seat.

"You okay?" Ken asked anxiously.

No answer. The old man's hands seemed to be wrestling with his legs. Finally he said, "I can't get up. Can you lend me a hand?"

Ken jumped up and tried to heft him by the arm. But no sooner he was on his legs they buckled under him and he fell back. A woman, fiftyish, with the same pointed nose as the old man, appeared in the doorway of the bus and hurried through it to his seat. Concern was on her face.

"Nothing's wrong," the old man assured her. "My legs just went to sleep. All I need to do is shake 'em a bit." Reaching down with trembling, horny hands, he rubbed the legs and moved them back and forth. "Guess I shoulda been a-moving when I was a-sitting. But, doggone, couple o' years ago I couda sat all the way to New York without even getting up to go to the toilet."

With Ken's help he stood up and stayed standing. "Well, I'm on my own now," he said, shuffling slowly and determinedly forward. "And if my daughter's cooking is all right, maybe I'll stay here a couple o' weeks 'r more. Don't reckon anybody's gonna whittle down those hills while I'm away." At the door he turned and waved. "So long, young feller."

New passengers got on, four of them giggling teen-agers. One of the girls took an empty seat in the front of the bus, one took a seat next to Ken and the other two took the double seat where the old man had been sitting. In between their giggles they munched on candy bars. "Blast off!" the one in the front seat screeched as the bus started. From nowhere the girl next to Ken produced a tiny transistor radio.



Incredible, how something so small could outdo a tractor! "I no love ya no more. Nyet, nyet, nyet." The drums beat, the electric guitars twanged. "I no love ya no more. Nyet, nyet, nyet." Up, down, down, up, the girls were in their seats and jumping out of them, now in the front of the bus, now in the rear, laughing, giggling, wiggling, making strange signals with their fingers which Ken, of an older generation, could only guess at.

The clamor was getting on his nerves. He looked up front. No hope. The driver had his ears pointed forward, he was jamming the accelerator hell-bent for Amarillo.

He guessed he was getting old too. Too bad, just when the girls were growing prettier (he had to admit it!) and it wasn't a sin any more to look at 'em. . . . Thank God he still had his teeth. He pulled out another cigar, bit the end off, lit up, and blowing out a cloud of smoke, dreamed he was a boy again . . . seeing his first yoke of oxen . . . an automobile for the first time . . . in a beautiful garden, looking auburn-haired Jewel O'Connor in the eyes for the first time (what courage it had taken!). His eyes half open, half closed, he watched them bounce from seat to seat like rubber balls. Jewel was the prettiest girl he had ever seen (up until that time) but she couldn't have bounced like that if she had tried. He wondered what year it was (it certainly wasn't in the newspapers; had the Pope or somebody like that proclaimed it in secret?) that it had stopped being a sin.



## **SHELBY, NEBRASKA, 1933**

Space is space  
For a long way  
Through the Plains,  
Their immense reduction  
Of things.

Trees are ghosts  
Against the sky,  
Buildings a balance  
Of mass and time.

The few birds  
That fly overhead  
Lock you into your bearings,  
The lines of your sight  
Opened on one direction  
From where  
All directions begin.

Where no matter  
How hard you look  
It is always Shelby, 1933,  
And the dust  
You still can't believe  
Is falling everywhere  
Swirls all around you,

The world ascending  
Particle by particle  
Into the sky,  
The Plains turned round  
With a vengeance:  
A landscape of dunes  
And drifts,  
Distances of glass.

At night you can hear it  
Scouring the roof,  
Feel it sift like sleep  
Into your eyes,  
Invading your life  
With all the momentum  
Of history, sintering  
Through lungs and belly,  
Shoved as far  
As love is desperate  
Into your wife.

Through the window's  
Scars of light you watch  
The sun come up  
Like blood out of Kansas.

The sand-blasted trees,  
Stripped of bark and leaves,  
Howl like Angels,  
Their white robes  
And tongues,  
The dust of their hair  
Streaming in the light  
Which is wind and flame—  
The great billowing air  
The world almost  
Does not come apart in.

## FROM AN ALBUM

*—after Mary Swander*

My grandmother glares, interrupted,  
her shadow a stroke of upturned earth,  
her hands planted in the pockets  
of her skirt. In this picture  
the curls are plaited from her hair.  
It is almost the color of her eyes  
though there is green still  
in that granite, in those eyes  
like cliffs my grandfather saw  
when they hauled their lives across the sea.

Once, my grandmother told me  
how the waves were blessed with a book,  
a blouse, her rosary thrown in the furrow  
of the keel like seed. "This too  
is a country of water," she warned,  
"dredge sand, hoard soil between the stones,  
trust only potatoes, the sparse inscrutable green."



## THE COUNTRY OF WATER

Always, it is the first time  
the same stranger struggles from your clothes  
as if desire were a form of drowning  
and it is the same face, the eyes  
no longer fists but hands, desperate,  
drawing me from my shoes and clothes.

\*

The wind is water at its own level  
a random shifting in the staggered cast  
of trees. You drift into the filtered light  
your face diluted with darkness, eyes empty  
in fear of what we have fallen into  
or from. Here, what we hold is our breath,  
what we see is solid only after letting go.

## FOR YOUR SISTER

You turn down the long drive lined with crab apple,  
the seed and pulp-smeared gravel like a trail.  
You find your father behind the white fences,  
his finger cut clean last year by the saw  
in the musty, jar-filled basement, sewn back now  
in ragged stitches, pointing at the peach tree,  
the pawpaw, spring transplants.  
Your sister, forty years, like roots  
along the river, shafts of pine, your sister  
who never married, who won't leave him,  
is ankle deep in compost and charcoal,  
is lifting the bandaged peach into the hole  
the plum tree made coming out, the shovelful of dirt  
mounded at her feet, his hands motioning the thick  
air from side to side.

You call to her past the hanging ox yoke, the clothes line  
strung with plaids, the strawberry plants.  
You call her name, on strike against your father's ear,  
the sound his body tries to make him understand,  
the white head shifting toward you.  
You watch his arms rise, the fingers shrunken,  
feet settling in the tightly sewn grass,  
eyes lifted in the shadow of the sweat-rimmed hat,  
in recognition. And it all comes back to you,  
the year the cattle stuck their faces in the mud  
and wouldn't lift themselves, the barn loaded to the rafters  
with manure, the fields lined with posts, barbed wire,  
fields of corn and soybeans and clay,  
and no rain in sight for months.

Full-faced, dirt-smeared, your sister turns toward you,  
arms limp and brown as quail, heads popped off,  
the brush and woods on fire and the birds darting out,  
the bottoms of your shoes slick with blood.  
She comes through the garden marked for tilling,  
broken sticks and bits of paper, rock piles.  
Rows of string arch back to the fences already heavy  
and blue with grapes, and behind the fences  
fields of corn as tall as school children,  
tassles of silk rising above their heads;  
then rows of husks like blond braids, the corn  
thrashed down; and behind your sister, the fields empty again,  
notched with hail and rain, and your father's chair  
still in its place against the porch.



## **NEAR THE COVERED BRIDGE**

You feel their coming growth  
as if inside you.  
You've watched the water rush  
in winter under ice where  
you stamped your foot,  
then were sorry to leave your mark.  
Now you believe in leaving things

untouched, though you can't wait  
to gather your greens.  
Your mouth waters imagining  
the bitterness. The bank  
soaks through your clothes but you  
demand crabapples to push out

curled leaves as if they only  
sleep with their hard blossoms.  
Spring's been so cold you won't  
touch Beaver Creek. But crows  
are here. You've just heard one  
you can't see and you call back  
what you think is the answer.

## **CELIBACY, A STORM**

Memory flakes and clings  
Like lichens to cliffs,  
Where out lines of succession  
Grow more vivid in the rain.

A peregrine falcon broods  
On her aerie in a jag  
Near the haphazard spruce,  
Her wings are half-fanned  
Over the remaining young.  
She smells the south winds  
For signs of clearing;  
Hail clouts the escarpment.

What spread and cracked  
Is stammering now,  
There is the quiet of wet rock,  
Swallows are tracing  
Irregular updrafts—  
Nose-diving back to their roosts.  
Soon it will be dark.

To thwart the spirits and keep bob cats at bay,  
I light an old bird's nest beneath and array  
Of fizzle sticks, cut from mountain mahogany;  
I kindle sparks with dry twigs, gathered  
From where the horned toad hides.  
Coyotes are in packs, sprinting  
For Degarmo Canyon; except for that,  
It is still: I hear my ears not hearing.

EDWARD C. PULASKI

As an old gold seeker from Ohio,  
the first thing you do is save your ass.  
you lead the men and two horses,  
          those bewildered scholars,  
into a cave. outside the fire rages;  
the men go crazy. but you draw your revolver  
and threaten to shoot the first to leave.  
they run about sloshing  
          hatsful of water on the smoldering timbers  
while you stand guard at the door  
          holding up a wet blanket against the burning world,  
the last to fall from the heat and gas.  
when you wake it's hours later,  
and you yell to the men stumbling  
          over your body "I'm not dead"  
you chuckle, just like Mark Twain, and  
they lead you out, eyes seared shut,  
          touching the charred, falling trunks,  
until after years having made love  
          to your wife you awake hours later  
to invent the tool that makes you famous  
          among all rangers, that strange device  
          straight from hell  
          with a blunt axe on one end  
          to hack through roots, and on the other  
a short rake, like a bird's claw  
          or a man's fingers locked in paroxysm  
with which you might happily grub yourself  
          across the sky,  
          tearing through the beneficent soil of light  
          looking for that hiding fire.



## SMALL CRAFT ADVISORY

Father died before my memory. The house was swallowed  
in a new light, a kind of glory that works on you  
like a sharp knife, cuts into you and carves  
all that you are, all that you will ever be.

Mornings, it was so much night.  
The kitchen window darkening the eastern hills.  
My brother diving into his dreams. My mother's light,  
the lamp's deep shade. The white runs slowly  
from her fingers. How the house lies.

The music is forever. Chopin, I think.  
She smiles at her fingers, her flying hands  
soft like aviation. Even at this distance,  
she looks beautiful. Think of her like this  
for the next twenty years. Now return  
to the kitchen lamp, a colored picture postcard,  
the TV on the blink. It only takes a little time.

Time is like a Buick in perfect tune.  
Driving the dark, the starter whines,  
the engine catches and roars, the light  
makes the great trees stand out  
beard to beard across the lawn.  
A small metal virgin stands on the moon  
of the dashboard.

At 55 I begin to age. Whole towns pass by.  
Same memory, same picture. The seat worn through  
to the springs, moths knocking at the windows.  
Still, I move the throttle further. I'm going  
home.

## MAIL ORDER

You work alone at the shop  
on the second floor above the grocery.  
It smells of sawdust, paint and rain.  
On school vacations I come with you  
and at the shipping table you show me  
what I will do.

Your hands  
dwarf mine, wrapping screws in cellophane.  
You fill the window feeders  
and the evening grosbeaks flock  
as soon as your back is turned.

Hours go by.  
This is a small town, no traffic, no noise.  
Only the flutter of black and yellow wings.  
At lunchtime you turn on the radio.  
I smooth the waxed paper  
from the edges of the bread.

We work till five,  
you in the back room spraying feeders,  
and me separating labels saying  
Fragile, This End Up, Do Not Crush.

## THE NEXT TIME IT RAINS

After the rain  
had stopped  
    mama would look up  
at the patched roof  
and words  
    would float from her mouth  
like smoke  
    know it won't be fixed  
the next time it rains  
and the porch  
worn down to the  
spots of rusted nails  
holding the splinter like boards together  
    and when the snow  
rested beside  
    the sinking pillars  
the half naked dog  
would dig it's way under the clipper  
house  
    and moan  
    like a baby  
    until the dirty is warm  
while the smell  
of burning pine  
flooded the room  
    we would sit around  
waiting for the  
log to disappear.



# REVIEWS

## *Unexpected Manna*

Gary Holthaus

Copper Canyon Press

Port Townsend, Washington

\$4, paper

Several years ago I was given as a gift a magic 8-ball, a mysteriously black globe that when rubbed answered all questions. I remember receiving answers to such important things as whether any girls loved me, when and if I was to go on my first date—all the trivia that was swimming around in my pubescent brain. Now, after the sad facts of maturity, those grave problems have become, among other things, lines from poems, memorable rhythms, troubling similes and metaphors. When I see a paper bag or a newspaper rolling over and over in the street I say, without fail, “unlike a man” from the poem by William Carlos Williams. When a man passes me dressed exquisitely in a Brooks Brothers suit, I cannot help but recall the last three searing lines of indictment from Kenneth Rexroth’s poem to Dylan Thomas, “Thou Shalt Not Kill.” And so many others. They are glue to the imagination. They somehow make the object or scene at which one is looking more accessible.

The same was true last summer flying the polar flight to Alaska. While floating over Greenland, the St. Elizabeth Islands and finally over Pt. Barrow and the Brooks Range, I could see the slow glacial push into the sun, the small villages blossoming one after another until they all became Anchorage. And as best I could, I recited to myself:

Down country,  
Past the wild hay’s stirring  
The rancher leans back toward  
That earlier time his dad  
Rode a horse from Dillon to Denver  
Never opening a gate.

Though thousands of miles from Dillon or Denver, those lines from Gary Holthaus' UNEXPECTED MANNA rang true.

Strangely enough, despite Alaska's overwhelming awe and the presence there of all the primal freedoms that Americans have long sought, the country fosters very few books of poems of any merit. And usually it holds true that a writer's tenure there is a short one, a matter of months perhaps. The solitude and the isolation are tremendous, like nothing in the Lower 48 states. The land holds a pristine mysticism, is aloof and uncompromising. It defies tradition or, at least, the traditional ways of looking at things. Gary Holthaus is one of the few poets who has stayed. And with the exception of a few poems dealing with Iowa and Montana, his UNEXPECTED MANNA deals exclusively with Alaska, both as geographic space and as state of mind.

In many ways his poems are reminiscent of Loren Eiseley's work, not so much Eiseley's poetry which grew increasingly unforgiving at the end, but Eiseley's probing and humble prose. Like Eiseley, Holthaus is a writer who prefers to keep himself in the background while letting all the things that speak so quietly have their day in court. Though sometimes clumsy in style, awkward in punctuation and line-breakage, when all is said and done UNEXPECTED MANNA is wise, honest, and unpretentious.

E. M. Forster, in assessing a book by Virginia Woolf, wrote: "It is for a voyage into solitude that man was created." I think of that statement when I read UNEXPECTED MANNA for certainly this book documents a solitudinous journey, one moving steadily North by Northwest reverring many of the myths and legends of Early America and its inhabitants, whether real or imaginary.

It is no coincidence that many of the poems are dominated by the heart-like rythms of the Alaskan Eskimo drums, a sound so eerie and hollow that once one hears it the sound will never be forgotten. In fact, dancing is mentioned in no fewer than five poems in section two of the book. It is as though, through the dance and with the drum as his instrument, Holthaus somehow mesmerizes nature, turning an angry she-wolf into something docile and benevolent. He employs it as a keen, community-oriented means, which all Eskimo dances are, "to make music the measure of life" in an environment that is hostile and indifferent in its dealings with mankind. In fact, as in "Turnagain Arm," the dance becomes a bodily prayer performed by an entire universe of flux:



Though no one is near, it is not just me  
Moving through this country  
But this country moving about me  
Glaciers and tides and winds  
Are larger than these  
The sure drift of the continent  
The globes slow turn inside the sun's turning  
Within the revolution of older suns  
Until  
There is no still point  
Central to this world's turning  
Only the vibrant, molten quaking  
The mystic centering union is dancing  
Minds moving into minds.

Do not believe in stillness . . .

Out of the movement the dance is born  
Out of the motion the song is sung  
Out of the union the light is borne  
Out of the dance the longing begun

When one considers that twenty-two hours of each winter day in Alaska is dark, that dusk and dawn are one and the same, both happening in a short two-hour span, then one can understand why so many of these poems are rarely centered under the bright sun. UNEXPECTED MANNA hovers in and around the dark, trying to find some kind of union between day and night, light and dark, the conscious and the unconscious. Any sun mentioned is more often a metaphorical one and is highly symbolic as in "Don Quixote's Warhorse Dreams of Victory":

In lightning, fever,  
We fumble to repair our armor,  
Race against a new reality—  
Again are broken, lifted to tread  
The stars and light, and fall  
Find deep within our falling  
The elements to make us rise again  
Until at last we stride rust-free  
And silver in to suns beyond  
Any Icarus dared to fly.

It is the soul that finds the light, the searing union where all colors collide. The body stays in darkness, a part of the igneous rocks and



the dust:

Tyrannosaurus  
And eohippus  
Little Crow and  
Bigfoot  
The dust of the dead long ago  
We walk it in our prairie furrows  
Climb it in our mountains  
Breathe it in our cities  
Dust fills my grin  
And grates my eyes  
I close them;  
It fills the cracks in my skin,  
I open and look again;  
I see myself in dust  
My children dissolving  
In dust fine ground  
Before Neanderthal became a cell.

UNEXPECTED MANNA, however, is by no means an impersonal book, one that speaks so obsessively of the raw elements of Alaska that human relationships are forgotten. Interspersed throughout the book are poems of love and remembrance, some of which are too nostalgic but are forgiven by the reader simply because this book speaks of humanness on every level. But the pervasive mood is one of darkness and of being lost, the poet's attempt to come to terms with an alien landscape, to find that sublime solitude, that full-blooded communion with the "old ways and old places."

What amazes me is that one rarely has seen any of Gary Holthaus' work in the numerous journals in the United States. I think of Sid Marty in Canada writing poems while working the highline of the Rockies, and getting little or no attention until Al Purdy saw fit to include his poems in an anthology he edited. Like Marty's *HEADWATER*, there is a privacy to *UNEXPECTED MANNA* that makes me think Holthaus shies away from the journals. It is the same kind of privacy one encounters in the diaries of the early trappers and woodsmen, individuals who realized perhaps it was best after all to talk to oneself.

William Carlos Williams wrote: "If it ain't a pleasure, it ain't a poem." And certainly these by Gary Holthaus are a pleasure. I assure you if given the space and the opportunity I would love nothing more than to cite poem after poem until I had made myself believe it was I

and not Holthaus who had written so many of these lines and stanzas. Holthaus is, in the words of Ezra Pound, that "rare carpenter who not only can put boards together, but who knows seasoned wood from green."

*Robert Hedin*

*Gillnets*

Samuel Green  
Cold Mountain Press,  
4705 Sinclaire Ave.,  
Austin, Texas 78756  
\$4 paper

It is a time  
for binding, for mending, for songs  
with rhythms of a healing man's fingers.  
(from "Calling for a Song on the Mountain")

There's much to be thankful for in this first book by Samuel Green. In it you hear a sure, convincing voice, you witness the mapping out of a clear vision and its possibilities. The poems are written with care, with an obvious love for the sound of words. How many poets have I read this year who treat language like some parents slap their kids around in laundromats? Too many. There's nothing easy or dashed off in any of Green's poems that I can see. All have the feeling of having been nurtured.

WHERE THE LINES CROSS, the first of three sections, is concerned with geographic/psychic locations. Poems are set in Tahiti, Antarctica, the Skagit Valley, aboard ship off the coast of Viet Nam, Thailand, and a hospital bed in Seattle.

Water is the book's motif: ponds, lakes, creeks, rivers and oceans figure in half the twenty-eight poems in *Gillnets*. So the world is seen as fluid and unstable. Only the reality of experience is given much credence, as though memory was its own locale. The speaker in this



last stanza of the section's title poem is navigating by stars, alone on the flying bridge:

I set the rules on the compass rose,  
walk them across the chart  
over Australia, over islands unnamed,  
over miles of blank ocean,  
draw my lines. In that delicate asterisk,  
where the lines cross  
in this slow breath of dawn  
I can tap my finger, thinking

*There I am*

even as I move on.

It's a marvelous description of disconnectedness. At the same time there's the security that your life has at least some direction. The compass lines prove it, that you are, or were, somewhere, like the strange tracks atomic particles leave behind that validate their existence. The poems in *Gillnets* are tracks left behind, locations verified by the lines of the mind's compass.

In the second section, COMING OUT IN SONG, the radius tightens, the poems are more centrally located, closer to home literally and spiritually. Poems about family, the past, angers, wounds. And healing. Which becomes one of Green's preoccupations, seeing the poem as a metaphor for the process of healing.

In the last section, GILLNETS, the poems go back out into the world, which now seems more like home, natural and mysterious. "Spearing Salmon in the Wynoochee River" is about relearning old hunting skills, about knowing how to 'see': "The third stab I remember refraction,/ catch the king in the middle of his broad belly/ and pin him to the gravel." In "Eagle Rock at Rattlesnake Creek," the speaker marvels at the uncanny architectures of stone. Where the land has been raped by men, as in "Hiking a Clearcut Near Raymond After a Rain," even here are the small but unmistakable evidences of a world that wants to heal itself: "Clean, the broad leaves of new salal,/ huckleberry, Oregon grape."

One poem I find intriguing is "Death Song for a Murdered Friend," a luminous elegy about a ghastly and sadistic crime. At first I wondered if the lyrical delicacy of the poem didn't soften the brutality of the event:



He rolls in the channel's middle,  
rolls and lists. Cattle grazing  
at the bank's edge dip their heavy heads  
for salt, roll large eyes  
and watch him float past.

Then I remembered the sea-change in Ariel's song, the transformations brought on by death, and my doubts became immaterial. In fact, the horror of the murder is actually heightened by the poem's gentle music and careful descriptions so that now I can't get that awful violence out of my mind. Which is what an elegy is supposed to do, of course. Make us feel the death and remember it as though the subject was an intimate friend. A news article of a murder does exactly the opposite: three minutes after you read it you've forgotten the whole thing, never really felt it to begin with.

"Gillnets," the last poem, describes the endless ritual of repairing nets, another lovely metaphor for the process of making things whole: "The needle weaves in and out,/ in and out, square knots mending/ the pattern again and again, like a refrain." Here is the moving last stanza of that poem:

If you are so intent  
coffee grows cold beside you,  
your back glows red in the sun,  
it is only that you can't bear  
the thought, heavy as sinkers,  
of anything so lovely as a salmon  
getting past you, slipping through again.

In any case, Samuel Green's *Gillnets* reinforces my belief that there are still *many* people who can make beautiful things with words, that "Such fusions are possibilities," (from "Letter to Sam Hamill").

*Edward Harkness*

*Guerilla Letters*  
Quinton Duval  
Quarterly West Press  
Salt Lake City  
\$2.00, paper

Quinton Duval's new chapbook, *Guerilla Letters*, is brief but durable. The thirteen one-page poems are terse, straightforward and honest. They embody a real experience, an experience of words, images. Then, somehow, they go further. From page to page, the reader knows with increasing assurance that a lively imagination will surface again and again, each time with surprises that turn out to be both marvelous and right.

A poet must begin somewhere, and Duval has the good sense to begin with himself. "The Song of the Wagon Driver" is perhaps the most lyrical and "telling" poem in the chapbook:

These thoughts are here to keep the darkness  
along the road away. The slim road that unrolls  
like a soiled bandage to the end.

When it becomes stones we can begin to soften.  
We can begin to sing out loud instead of inside us.  
The horse's song . . . he knows what he means.  
The driver's song is what he decides it should be  
at the moment he sings.

I usually sing about my wife in her room  
waiting for the present in my pocket.  
About my son in bed, dreaming he hears us  
in our peculiar bedroom chorus. About god,  
who believes he must be in my song or  
it won't be any good.

This reflective, soft, but tough, poetry comes across. We know the poet is reached. We know that his thrust is toward the soul, the timeless. The poem is deeply personal, yet accessible. It involves you, me, and clearly Quinton Duval.

Perhaps what moves best is Duval's tenacity in being so straight, so clear, so true—with a complete lack of petulance. He sets things down plainly and decisively. His images are highly imaginative, but they are carefully chosen and are appropriate to the poem, to what he wants to reveal. Duval uses common, everyday words. The images are generally of the most natural kind: bird and sea and stone. The

landscapes are as spare as the words.

Midstream, in "The River of Birds", we realize that the poems become even lonelier and more imaginative—a man talking to himself always, trying to make sense, if only to himself:

That's our guide. I'm sorry to tell you  
he is dead now. Shot in the heart.  
He wasn't so lucky as I have been.  
On the Mountain we find bananas and  
we have a good supply of coffee and flour.  
My boots are wearing thin but I have been  
promised the next pair we find.

Duval creates a new imaginative experience, a new world in which our senses are seized with terrible and yet wonderful ideas. The boots of the dead become an important, even vital, matter to the living. The tropics, a strange and beautiful fantasy in themselves, nevertheless become the setting for harsh reality. Again, Duval brings us into terms with this reality in "Angels of the Sun":

Reality! I want these things: I want my woman, one.  
No . . . first a roof over my head and my mouth full  
of food or love . . . then my wife. My guitar,  
my lover, my friends . . . Two . . .

It's impossible. I stand here pissing air  
into the dust. The months are like the people  
we bury, dragging their feet all the way.

Duval is intrigued with the sound and shape of words. He never forgets that the poem should be written for the ear as well as the eye. Though for me, "The Song of The Wagon Driver", has the most beautiful music in the volume, there are other instances worth citing. Sometimes the rhythm becomes staccato as in "I Point Out A Bird":

This bird I've seen before walking out  
of the forest with his head down. Do you remember?  
Riding a hot train, guns held over the head  
to make more room. Hiding in a cart under a layer  
of straw, like a bottle of wine and quite as fragile.  
Coming home to an invisible town and  
a wife made of clear air and smoke.



“The Stone Bridge”, arrives appropriately enough at the halfway point of the volume. In addition to the melody, there is wit, modest wisdom, and an abundance of sheer poetic pleasure:

You will laugh, I hope, when I tell you  
we had to blow the damn thing up.  
Naturally, I couldn't help thinking  
it was our love flying in every direction  
like urgent stone birds.

Of course, I'm using this incident.  
The fact your letters grow thinner (like me)  
isn't an influence. Perhaps you feel  
differently now I am gone.  
The durability of hot lead disturbs you  
too much. You already know my shallow grave.

Admittedly, this poetry is pointed and painful. Duval has extraordinary descriptive powers; it is a correctness and accuracy that leads the reader to believe that Duval is genuinely concerned. In “Just Waking Up” he spells out this concern:

I will tell you this: I am afraid I will  
never get to change something before  
I am changed myself.

*Thomas Mitchell*

## CONTRIBUTORS

JAMES LEE BURKE's third novel, *The Lost Get Back Boogie*, is looking for a publisher. He has been a Breadloaf Fellow and the recipient of a grant from the Southern Federation of State Arts Agencies.

LAURIE BLAUNER's poems have appeared in *Greenfield Review*, *Kudzu*, *Road Apple Review*, and elsewhere. She's in the MFA program at the University of Montana.

KATHY CALLAWAY, curmudgeon-at-large, has settled in Missoula, Montana for the time being to work and write. Her poems are out or forthcoming in *The Nation*, *Antaeus*, and *Ploughshares*.

JERAH CHADWICK's work appeared in CutBank 10. He has "worked in theater and as a singer for a punk rock band."

PATRICIA CLARK is from Tacoma, Washington. She studied with Nelson Bentley at the University of Washington and is now in the MFA program at the University of Montana.

MELINDA DAWSON lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

DEVON MILLER DUGGAN teaches at the University of Delaware in Newark. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, *padan aram*, and *Shenandoah*.

SHARON DUNN co-edits *The Agni Review* and is a partner, with her brother, in a direct mail business in New Hampshire. "Mail Order" is her first published poem.

JULIE FAY lives in Tucson, Arizona.

STUART FRIEBERT has just finished a new collection, *Turtle Headache*, and is "publishing translations of Raboni (with Vinio Rossi) and Brambach all around."

ROBERT GIBB's books are *Whalesongs* and *The Margins*. He is the creative writing fellow at Cedar Crest College in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

ELTON GLASER teaches English and Creative Writing at the University of Akron. His chapbook, *Peripheral Vision*, is due out in January from Bits Press.

EDWARD HARKNESS lives in Naches, Washington. His second chapbook is due out soon from Confluence Press.

RON HAUGE's cartoons have appeared in newspapers and magazines. He collaborated in the production of *Missoula Comix*.

ROBERT HEDIN is currently living in France. His book, *Snow Country*, was published by Copper Canyon Press.

WILLIAM S. HILLMAN lives in Bayport, New York.

LUCI HUHN lives in Boston.

DAVID JAMES has poems coming out in *The Seattle Review* and *Poetry Now*. He's finishing his M.A. at Central Michigan State, where he teaches English composition.

PAULA JONES is poetry editor of *The Seattle Review*, and a teaching fellow at the University of Washington. Her poetry appears in recent issues of *Poetry Northwest* and *Intro 9*.

ROBERT KING lives in Seattle, Washington.

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WILLIAM OLSEN teaches English at the University of Arizona where he is finishing his MFA work. His poems appear in recent issues of *Falcon*, *Greenfield Review*, and *Wind*.

JOHN T. POE's poems appear in *With The Rest of My Body: Poems from the South Carolina Prisons*.

JOHN QUINN, formerly of Boring, Oregon, is now living in Japan.

CAROLANN RUSSELL lives and works in Missoula, Montana. Her poems have appeared most recently in *Columbia* and *Poetry Northwest*.

DON SCHOFIELD teaches English composition at the University of Montana, where he is enrolled in the MFA program.

DANIEL E. SHAPIRO recently moved to Missoula from San Diego.

LAURIE SHECK lives and works in New York. Her poetry is forthcoming in *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, and *Poetry Northwest*.

DON SNOW lives in Stevensville, Montana.

CLAUDE STANUSH lives in San Antonio, Texas. His fiction has appeared widely in such places as *Kansas Quarterly* and *Prairie Schooner*. In addition to making films, he has written non-fiction for *Life*, *Time* and other general interest magazines.

NANCY TAKACS lives in Granger, Utah.

PETER WILD has published three books with Doubleday: *Cochise* (1973), *The Cloning* (1974), and *Chihuahua* (1976). He lives in Tucson, Arizona and is an active conservationist.

WARREN WOESSNER edits *Abraxas* in Madison, Wisconsin. His chapbook, *Lost Highway* was published by Poetry-Texas Press.

#### MAGAZINES RECEIVED

*The Agni Review* (9), Sharon Dunn & Askold Melnyczuk, eds., P.O. Box 349, Cambridge, MA 02138. \$4/year.

*Alembic* (1), David Dayton, ed., 1744 Slaterville Road, Ithaca, NY 14850. \$5/year.

*Beloit Poetry Journal* (Summer, Fall 1978), Robert H. Glauber et al, eds., Box 2, Beloit, WI 53511. \$4/year.

*Bits* (8), Dennis Dooley et al, ed., Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH 44106.

*The Capilano Review* (12), Bill Schermbrucker, ed., 2055 Purcell Way, North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. \$6/2 issues.

*The Carolina Quarterly*, (Spring/Summer, Fall 1978), Katherine Kearns & Margaret Ketchum, eds., Greenlaw Hall 066-A, Univ. of NC, Chapel Hill, NC. \$6/year.

*The Chariton Review* (Spring, Fall 1978), Jim Barnes, ed., Division of Language and Literature, Northwest Missouri State University, Kirksville, MO 63501. \$7/4 issues.

*Colorado-North Review* (Spring 1978), James Inskeep & Ronn David Silverstein, eds., University Center, UNC, Greeley, CO 80631. \$4/year.



- Colorado State Review* (Fall 1977), Bill Tremblay & Wayne Ude, eds., 360 Liberal Arts, CSU, Fort Collins, CO 80523. \$4/year.
- Columbia* (Fall 1977), John Plaskett, ed., School of the Arts, Writing Division, 404 Dodge, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027.
- Dacotah Territory* (15), Mark Vinz, ed., Moorhead State University, Moorhead, MN. \$2.50/year.
- Fiction* (5, nos. 2 & 3), Mark Jay Mirsky, ed., CCNY, New York, NY 10031. \$10.50/4 issues.
- Fiction \* Texas* (1), Tom Carter & Anne Sherrill, eds., College of the Mainland, Mainland, TX 77590.
- The Greenfield Review* (Spring, Fall 1978), Joseph Bruchac, ed., Greenfield Center, NY 12833. \$5/2 issues.
- Kayak* (48, 49), George Hitchcock, ed., 325 Ocean View, Santa Cruz, CA 95062. \$4/4 issues.
- Kudzu* (6), Jim Peterson et al, eds., P.O. Box 865, Cayce, SC 29033. \$4/year.
- Mr. Cogito* (4, No. 1), R. A. Davies & J. M. Gogol, eds., Box 627, Pacific University, Forest Grove, OR 97116. \$3/3 issues.
- Panjandrum* (6 & 7), Dennis Koran, ed., 99 Sanchez St., San Francisco, CA 94114.
- Pequod* (1978), David Paradis & Mark Rudman, eds., P.O. Box 491, Forest Knolls, CA 94933. \$5/year.
- Poetry \* Texas* (2), Brenda R. Brown & Jo Ann Pevoto, eds., College of the Mainland, Mainland, TX 77590. \$3/year.
- Porch* (4), James Cervantes, ed., 1422 37th Ave., Seattle, WA 98122. \$7/year.
- Stand* (19, No. 4), Jon Silkin et al., eds., 59 Clarendon St., Boston, MA 02116 (USA address). \$1.50/copy.
- Tar River Poetry* (Fall 1978), Peter Makuck, ed., Austin Building, ECU, Greenville, NC 27834. \$3/year.
- Time Capsule* (Fall 1978), Marc Crawford, ed., Livingston College, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ 08903.
- Western Humanities Review* (Summer 1978), Jack Garlington, ed., UU, Salt Lake City, UT 84112. \$6/year.
- Westigan Review* (12), Don Stap, ed., UU, Salt Lake City, UT 84112. \$6/4 issues.
- Whetstone* (2), Michael Bowden, ed., P.O. Box 226, Bisbee, AZ 85603. \$5/3 issues.
- Willow Springs* (1), Thomas J. Smith, ed., P.U.B., P.O. Box 1063, EWU, Cheney, WA 99004. \$2.25/year.
- Window* (6 & 7), Paul Deblinger et al, eds., 7005 Westmoreland Drive, Takoma Park, MD. \$6/4 issues.
- Yakima* (2), Jim Bodeen & Barry Grimes, eds., 621 S. 30th Ave., Yakima, WA 98902. \$5.50/year.

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

- The Broken Boat*, Mark Anderson, poems, Ithaca House, \$3.50.
- Antelope are Running*, Judith Anne Azrael, poems, Confluence Press, \$2.50.

*Certain Women*, Ron McFarland, poems, Confluence Press, \$2.50.  
*The Chinese Poems*, Dan Gerber, poems, Sumac Press, \$3.95.  
*Circumstances*, Robert Vander Molen, poems, Sumac Press, \$3.95.  
*The Climbers*, John Hart, poems, University of Pittsburgh Press, \$3.95.  
*A Cloth of Light*, Don Stap, poems, Westigan Review Press, \$.50.  
*Crossing the Phantom River*, James Masao Mitsui, poems, Graywolf Press, \$4.00.  
*Everything Goes Without Saying*, William Studebaker, poems, Confluence Press, \$3.25.  
*Exile No More*, Tom Morrill, poems, \$3.00.  
*The Forbidden Writings of Lee Wallek*, Curt Johnson, nonfiction, December Press, \$6.00.  
*Gasoline Dreams*, G.E. Murray, poems, Red Hill Press, \$2.00.  
*The Ghost of Meaning*, G. S. Sharat Chandra, poems, Confluence Press, \$3.25.  
*Guerilla Letters*, Quinton Duval, poems, Quarterly West Press, \$2.00.  
*How the Sow Became a Goddess*, Jim Heynen, poems, Confluence Press, \$2.50.  
*Liar's Dice*, Carol Frost, poems, Ithaca House, \$3.50.  
*The Moon Rides Witness*, Dorothy Dalton, poems, Wolfson, \$1.25.  
*Nostalgia for the Present*, Andrei Voznesensky, poems, Doubleday, \$4.95.  
*Odalisque in White*, Norman Dubie, poems, Porch Publications, no price listed.  
*Parts of Speech*, Joan Swift, poems, Confluence Press, \$3.50.  
*Pawtracks*, Tim McNulty, poems, Copper Canyon Press, \$4.00.  
*Pictures at an Exhibition*, Greg Orfalea, poems, Confluence Press, \$3.00.  
*Portfolio*, Paul Vangelisti, poems, Red Hill Press, \$2.00.  
*The Pregnant Man*, Robert Phillips, poems, Doubleday, \$4.95.  
*The Rat Poems*, Peter Meinke, poems, Bits Press, \$2.00.  
*The Red Dreams*, Ken Gerner, poems, Copper Canyon Press, \$3.50.  
*A Season in the Hour, Poems from the Prisons of South Carolina*, poems, South Carolina Arts Commission, \$3.00.  
*She Would Come to Me*, Dick Le Mon, poem, Westigan Review Press, \$1.50.  
*Silence as a Method of Birth Control*, James Hepworth, poems, Confluence Press, \$2.50.  
*Smoke the Burning Body Makes*, Steve Schutzman, poems, Panjandrum Press, \$3.00.  
*Stealing the Children*, Carolyne Wright, poems, Ahshta Press, no price listed.  
*The Tale of Sunlight*, Gary Soto, poems, University of Pittsburgh Press, \$3.95.  
*Village Journal*, Greg Kuzma, poems, Best Cellar Press, no price listed.  
*Vivisection*, Ron Mieczkowski, poems, Stone Press, \$1.25.  
*Walhalla*, Frank Graziano, poem, South Carolina Arts Commission, no price listed.  
*With the Rest of My Body, Poems from the South Carolina Prisons*, poems, South Carolina Arts Commission, no price listed.  
*Witness*, Beau Beausoleil, poems, Panjandrum Press, \$3.00.

WHERE WE ARE:  
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Lee Bassett	Ed Lahey
Ralph Burns	David Long
Rex Burwell	David McElroy
Warren Carrier	Michael Poage
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With an Introductory Note by James Wright

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